
WIN!
5 GAME BOY MICROS
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N·G·C
ISSUE #113
DECEMBER 2005 /£3.99
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INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING
REVIEWED!
BATTALION WARS
It's gonna conquer your Christmas!
DON'T MISS!
TIMEWARP
Your monthly guide to retro Nintendo gaming
DECEMBER 2005
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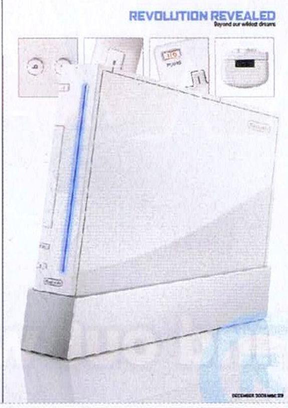
ADVANCE NOW!



So there we were, gutted like fish in a restaurant, after Nintendo's announcement of the 2006 delay of *Zelda: Twilight Princess.* But Nintendo, playful as ever, was keeping the good news for last, unveiling the controller for its next-gen Revolution console at the recent Tokyo Game Show. And it's so far from being just another joypad that it's hard to find the words to express the fantastic potential of it all. Regardless, we give it our best shot – dash off to page 22 to get the lowdown on what could be the most important development in video games since Miyamoto decided to make a monkey out of a donkey.

Still, that's the future – what about the here and now? Well, Nintendo has provided once again, working with Kuju to create *Battalion Wars*, a game that has successfully turned the handheld *Advance Wars* series into an engaging and tactical shooter for Cube. Don't believe us? Then check out our massive review starting on page 50, then come back and apologise, you lousy heckler. Oh, and don't forget the DS. Nintendo certainly hasn't. Turn to page 30 to find out why.
TEAM NGC







SUBSCRIBE TODAY!
Go to page 70 to see how you can get **NGC** delivered direct to your door, before it hits the news stands.

WHY WE'RE No.1 FOR NINTENDO

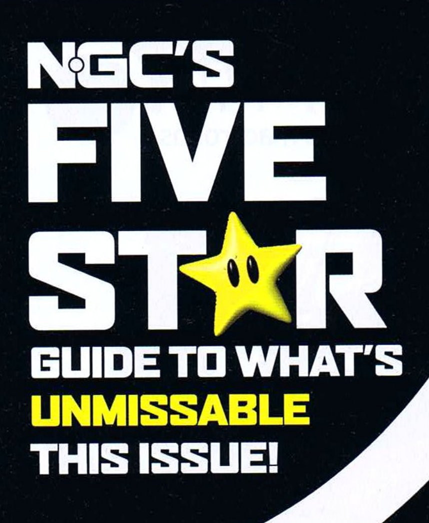
NGC's the result of over a decade of gaming genius – so you're the best-informed Nintendo gamer around.



■ First there was the SNES, and Super Play came out alongside it – fanboys rejoiced.

■ A new machine meant a new magazine – but one with the same high standards.

■ Now we've got Gamecube, and you've got **NGC**. That's 13 years of Ninty love right there.





REVOLUTION

THE FUTURE OF VIDEOGAMES

Get the **NGC** verdict on Nintendo's incredible next-gen controller.



BATTALION WARS

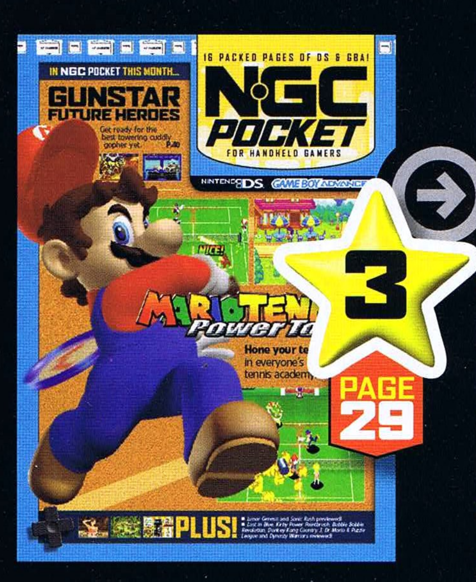
A BRAVE NEW WORLD

Could this be Nintendo's best GC game of 2005?

BATTALION WARS

Find out why Ninty's barmy army rule!

PAGE 50



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4 PAGE 56

POKÉMON XD: GALE OF DARKNESS
COULD IT BE LOVE?
Now with catchable Pokémon inside your trousers!

5 PAGE 72

SHIGSY'S BIG MOUTH
WORLD ACCORDING TO SHIGSY
Bringing you predictions for Nintendo's future, straight from Miyamoto's mouth…

WHAT'S IN NGC?

More life-altering, Pokémon-playing, Mario-manipulating, Revolution-anticipating hilarity…

PREVIEWS

The almost-but-not-quite-here games guide.



14 **TRUE CRIME: NEW YORK CITY**
True Crime hitches over to the east coast in an explosive molotov cocktail fuelled ride around town.

18 **HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE**
Do the dragon-dodge fandango.

20 **SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG**
Aliens vs humans plus hedgehog. That ol' chestnut…

32 **LUNAR GENESIS**
The DS's first RPG – hoorah!





NEWS

The latest stories and tales of terror.

6 **NEWS**
The latest titbits on offer from our newsdesk, virtually guaranteed to have you crying and possibly even screaming out for more.

29 **POCKET NEWS**
News from the home of handheld gaming, with more love and affection than you could give to a puppy in, ooh, about 5 minutes?

OTHER STUFF

Why use a thesaurus when 'stuff' says it all?



76 **TIPS**
Complete Spider-Man in its web-twanging entirety.

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Our monthly delve into the dusty world of retro.

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In association with British Cheese.

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The top 100 games on Gamecube.

98 **END GC**
Because we had to.

REVIEWS

Use these pages to say "pleeease mu-ummm"

34 **HANDHELD**
Kirby Power Paintbrush, Bubble Bobble, Mario Tennis Power Tour, Gunstar Future Heroes, Donkey Kong Country 3, Dr Mario & Puzzle League and Dynasty Warriors reviewed.

50 **BATTALION WARS**
The realities of war are harsh – don't be taken in by cartoony graphics.

56 **POKÉMON XD**
Pokétastic as ever, see if you can wrap your Pikachu around this beauty.

58 **MARIO FOOTBALL**
Behold mortals: the wonder of Donkey Kong playing football.

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He's the king of swing. Or is that Donkey Kong? Or Boyz 2 Men?

62 **SIMS 2**
Alien abduction, neon green vomit and premature death. It's all here…

64 **MARIO BASEBALL**
Well, we're all turning into Americans anyway, so why stop now?

65 **DANCING STAGE: MARIO MIX**
Face the music and dance, baby. Go on, you know you can't resist…

67 **LEGO STAR WARS**
It turns out that the phantom menace was the casting director.

68 **X-MEN**
You could almost tickle Wolverine's tummy – this one's a labour of love.

69 **MARVEL**
A host of Marvel characters here, from the famous to the "who?"

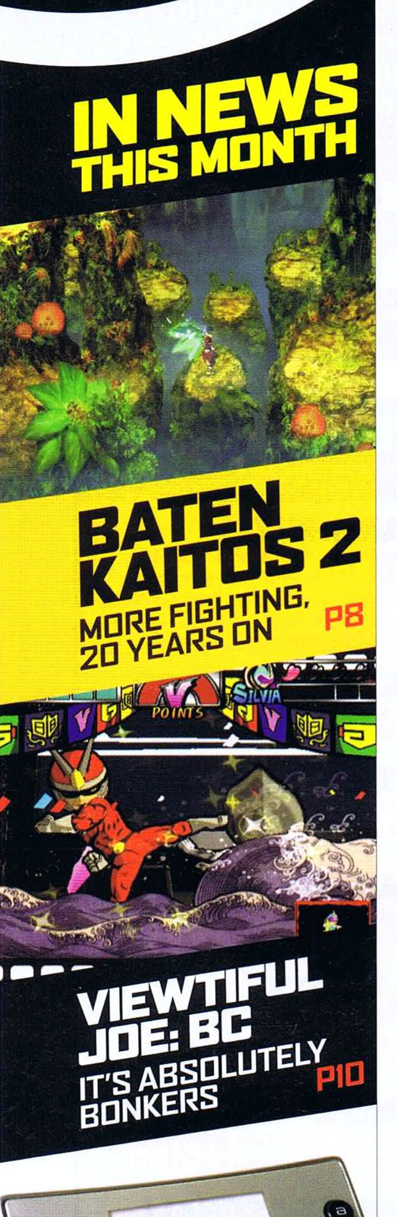
OUR PROMISE

In order to get the most up to date gossip to you, we keep our news pages open right til the last minute. We suspect that this month we'll be forced to sprint to the printers with them in a high-speed relay and, if you've ever seen games journalists running, you'll realise what a terrifying prospect this is. If you're reading these words now, at least you know that we fought the good fight. Let's just hope no lives were lost.

NGC BRINGING YOU NEWS FIRST

NEWSDESK

IN NEWS THIS MONTH

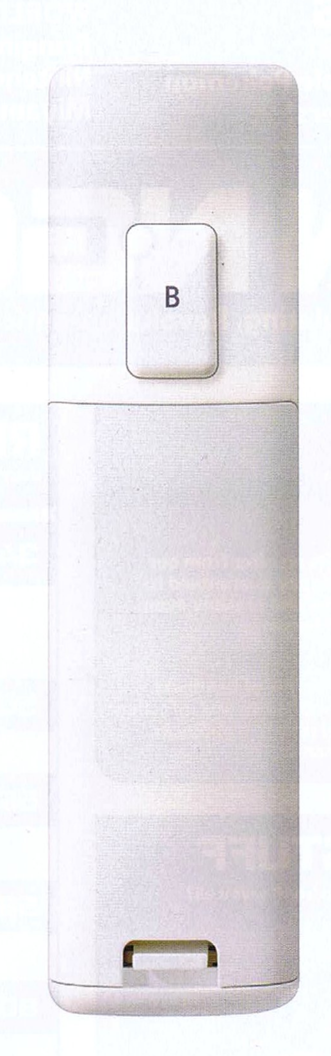


BATEN KAITOS 2
MORE FIGHTING, 20 YEARS ON P8

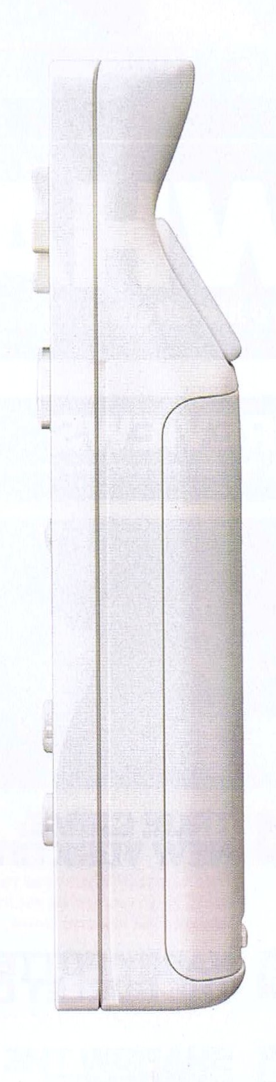
VIEWTIFUL JOE: BC
IT'S ABSOLUTELY BONKERS P10

WIN A MICRO
PLUS DR MARIO & PUZZLE LEAGUE GAME P12

AND MORE...







THE REVOLUTION TAKES SHAPE

Nintendo bigs up next generation; world goes ape for controller.







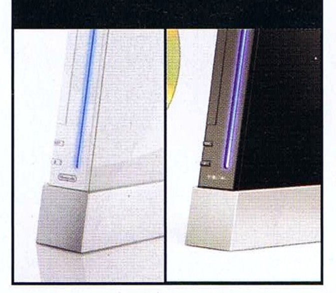
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS (GC)
Still no confirmed release date for this one, but it'll be worth waiting for – it looks like it could be the best game on GC. You know – like – THE best game… ever. Are you excited? You should be. You will be.
Out: 2006

NAME DROPPED

Alongside *that* controller and the new iPod-white paintjob, there was another surprise for Revolution watchers this month: the logo's gone. More specifically, all references to the name 'Revolution' have been given the chop.

Nintendo always made it clear that Revolution was a codename, and they've happily fiddled with their console monickers before (Gamecube was codenamed Dolphin for years). Still, we wouldn't read too much into this latest development. And even if Nintendo are changing the name, they only need call on **NGC** for better alternatives: Nintendo nPod (Kittsy), Game Wedge (Paul), Power Slab '06 (Greener) and, ingeniously, Dolphin (Tom).

Have you got a better name than Revolution for Revolution? Email us at ngc@futurenet.co.uk, using the subject line 'Name That Console'. We'll print the best – and worst – in a future issue. Nintendo is watching! Probably.





Δ Get your 'telly remote' gags out of the way now, 'kay?

Δ It should be easy for people who have started a Gamecube game to simply switch the interface and keep working with the new controller.

The big news is, of course, *that* controller. Rather than squeeze the details in here, we've gone all-out for an exhaustive NGC six-pager that properly verdictizes Revolution's 'joypad' (if you can call it that). Scoot to page 22 and drink in the info you know you want.

There's plenty more where that came from, too. Following the controller bombshell, Nintendo's VIPs have been telling anyone who'll listen about how Revolution will bruise Sony and Microsoft up real nice.

Big boss Iwata's currently refusing to be drawn on Revolution's price tag, though he did admit it "must be affordable for non-gamers." If you were around for Gamecube's build up – when much the same talk was being bandied about – then you're probably thinking what we're thinking: there's definite sub-£200 console possibilities.

How can they pull that off? By refusing to throw cash at what Iwata believes are needless advances in videogame visuals. It's no secret you'll have to haul a high-definition TV home to get the most out of consoles like Xbox 360 – and Nintendo's big cheese questions whether, if you've got a normal telly, there'll realistically be much to separate Revolution, 360 and PS3: "I really don't think that people can tell such a huge difference between the machines."

Nintendo will be stressing accessibility over eye candy. "In order to invite [new audiences] to the world of gaming," said Iwata, "we have to dispatch the message, 'This is something relevant for you… so why don't you touch it? If you touch it, we are sure you are going to love it.' That's more important than saying that we have more beautiful graphics."

"IT'S GETTING A BIG THUMBS UP FROM THE DEVELOPERS..."

Elsewhere, Shigsy revealed that Revolution games can be created on the Gamecube development kits already sitting on coders' desks, which means instant jazzed-up Revolution versions of existing GC games are a distinct possibility.

Meanwhile, it's a big double thumbs up from developers in the direction of *that* controller. Michael *King Kong* Ancel said he's "mad about it", and that he feels "like a child with a new toy, opening millions of new possibilities."

MARIO KART DS
Another game that has been delayed, but unlike *Zelda*, it's only been put back by two weeks – just so Ninty can get the WiFi sorted all over Europe.
Out: November 25



METROID PRIME HUNTERS (DS)
The graphics are some of the best DS has seen, and every DS player will be salivating over the demo. Can't wait to play the full version.
Out: Early 2006

NOW PLAYING

TOM E
MARIO BASEBALL
Nintendo
NGC/113 80%



I'm still enjoying this and now that I'm playing it in English, I finally understand the mini-missions you get in the middle of matches – and I'm unlocking a whole load of new characters. *Mario Baseball* is far better than *Smash Football*.

MARTIN
GUNSTAR FUTURE HEROES
Sega
NGC/113 5/5



Absolutely brilliant. *Gunstar* puts me in mind of a late-'80s/early-'90s coin-op – it's totally crammed with 2D sprites and things going bang. Plus, it's got a giant gopher in it that gets run over by a truck. And then – *then* – you can set him on fire.

GERAINT
BATTALION WARS
Nintendo
NGC/113 90%



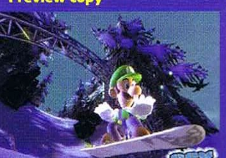
What a turnaround. *Battalion Wars* was looking dodgy as all hell a few months back, but it's turned into a game that drags the Advance Wars concept off in a new – and actually entirely brilliant – direction. Comedy German accents, too.

PAUL
FREEDOM FIGHTERS
EA
NGC/86 83%



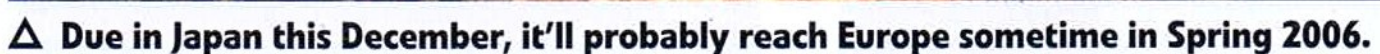
An incredibly rewarding game. Playing it, I can make believe I'm some kind of stealth professional. The ragdoll effects are fantastic, and the scenario – a hypothetical post-WWII world where Germany won the war – is a definite winner.

GREENER
SSX ON TOUR
EA
Preview copy



Despite the self-consciously ker-azy sketchbook menu screens and the crash-prone preview disc, *SSX* is still thrilling enough to make me giggle. *On Tour* will rock harder than the horse playing guitar on the loading screen.



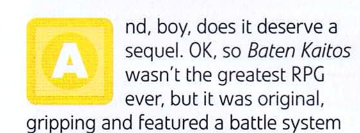

Δ Due in Japan this December, it'll probably reach Europe sometime in Spring 2006.



PUSH THE BATEN

Namco's sharp card-battler Baten Kaitos gets a sequel.

And, boy, does it deserve a sequel. OK, so *Baten Kaitos* wasn't the greatest RPG ever, but it was original, gripping and featured a battle system that felt fresh. And so, *Baten Kaitos 2* is born, with a Japanese subtitle that definitely won't be leaving the country: *Hajimari no Tsubasa to Kamigami no Shishi* (The Wings of the Beginning and the Heir to the Gods).



> **"WE FAIL TO SEE HOW IT'LL BE ANYTHING BUT A WINNER..."**

Taking place 20 years after the original, it follows the story of Sagi, a brand new character, along with female team mate Mili and living puppet Gilo who, in a Wizard of Oz-style slant, is searching for the reason he exists. There are no details regarding any changes to the combat, but we expect there to be numerous tweaks, and the number of cards for you to collect and fight with is likely to increase from a *lot* to *lots and lots*. Given the strong foundation set by the original, we fail to see how it'll be anything but a winner for Namco.

Δ The lush organic backdrops are present and correct.





Δ No RPG is worth a damn if it doesn't feature a cascade of glowing feathers.



SUPERMAN RETURNS...

...hopefully to clean up the mess he made last time.



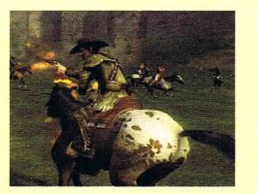
Superman and Nintendo don't have the best of relationships, what with his games having received average marks (at best) over the years. But still, there's hope for Supes to get his day, as EA has announced *Superman Returns: The Videogame*, a tie-in with the forthcoming movie. Both are due next summer, with the game being created by EA Tiburon, the studio behind the *Madden NFL* series. Of *course*. Let's just hope the Man of Steel doesn't become the Man of *Steal*; we're expecting more than half-pinched ideas from *Spider-Man 2*.



CONTINUED



KING KONG
One of the few film licences to provoke genuine excitement in the office since *GoldenEye*, *King Kong* looks amazing. Made by Michel Ancel of *Beyond Good and Evil* fame, this is going to be great.
Out: November



GUN
Neversoft have taken a break from their *Tony Hawk's* production line to make this Wild West-based free-roaming crime fest. It's going to be a bit like *Grand Theft Auto*, only with horses.
Out: November



Bub and Bob are back!

in a new BUBBLE BOBBLE adventure exclusively for Nintendo DS™



- **100 new exciting levels to explore!**
- **All-new power bubbles and bubble attacks.**
- **Microphone-activated challenges.**
- **Bubble mini games.**
- **Dual screen action.**
- **Multi-player mode 2-4 players – friends can play!**
- **Includes a perfect re-creation of the original Bubble Bobble arcade machine game!**

Rising Star Games

www.risingstargames.com

ATARI

NINTENDO DS™

NINTENDO DIFFERENCE?

You never forget your first time…



NO. 3 PIKMIN

We can still remember the E3 expo in 2001, and the worried glances that assembled journos exchanged when Shigsy rolled out his new project: not a new Zelda title as expected, but a crowd of little multicoloured plant men running yelping around Miyamoto's own garden.

Pikmin, of course, turned out to be brilliant. We could use all the hands of everyone at NGC to count its genius moments – the little Pikmin battering down walls with their heads, the way they'd sit and have a bit of a rest when momentarily freed from Olimar's tyrannical reign – but we'd still run out of fingers and have to use our toes and, possibly, other things.

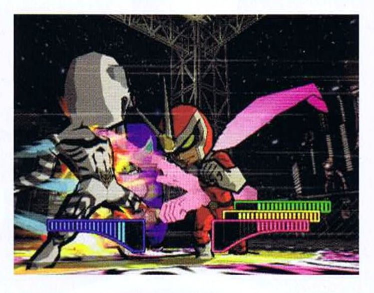
The best moment, though? That was one that most people probably didn't even realise was there. Leave the joypad alone for a bit, and Olimar's tiny army would gently pick him up and carry him over to their spaceship. So cute: but it got better. Olimar would bang his head on the Pikmin's onion-shaped craft during the beam-up process – at which point, for absolutely no reason whatsoever, you'd be treated to a little fireworks display.

And that was it. An utterly pointless secret that was nonetheless an instant heart-warmer for anyone who discovered it. That's real Nintendo magic.





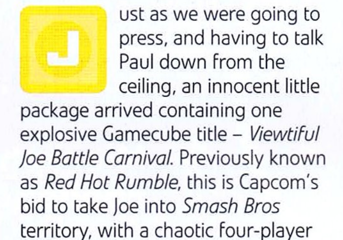




△ ***Viewtiful Joe: Battle Carnival*** **is looking as chaotic as *Smash Bros.***

THE JOE MUST GO ON

The Viewtiful Battle Carnival rides into NGC town…



Just as we were going to press, and having to talk Paul down from the ceiling, an innocent little package arrived containing one explosive Gamecube title – *Viewtiful Joe Battle Carnival*. Previously known as *Red Hot Rumble*, this is Capcom's bid to take Joe into *Smash Bros* territory, with a chaotic four-player beat 'em up featuring a wealth of characters and power-ups from the past two Joe games.

It arrived too late for review, but here's our first opinion of it: if Cadbury was to make a chocolate bar called 'Madness', *Battle Carnival* is what it would taste like. It's absolutely bonkers, and the story mode seems to be really well thought out. We played and finished the first episode, and it made some lovely use of backdrops and bosses from previous games. Plus, there are only six characters available at the start, with room for a further six to be unlocked.

Is it any good, though? We'll tell you the score next month, in our *Viewtiful* review.

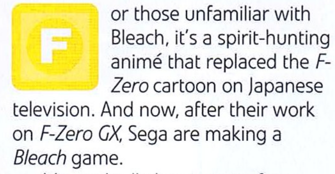




△ **Nice MC Hammer baggy trousers.**

BLEACH

Animé turns ass-kicker.



For those unfamiliar with Bleach, it's a spirit-hunting animé that replaced the *F-Zero* cartoon on Japanese television. And now, after their work on *F-Zero GX*, Sega are making a *Bleach* game.

It's markedly less in-your-face than the mad Japan-only fighters that have spun off from Bleach's comic stablemates *One Piece* and *Naruto*, this is a 2D cel-shaded kick-puncher that gives you the ability to slide in and out of the screen in order to dodge flaming fireballs and the like. In addition to this, it's also got *Matrix*-style slow-mo effects. It's becoming videogame law.

We also grabbed a quick go on the DS version of *Bleach* this month. It's all zoom-happy camera angles with some special attacks on the touch screen. The verdict: nicely fighty. We'll have more on both games soon.



CONTINUED



NEW SUPER MARIO BROS (DS)
The first official addition to the *Mario* series in nearly a decade, this incarnation sees the plumbers reborn in beautiful 2D-yet-3D. And we simply can't wait. We want it. We want it NOW.
Out: TBA



POKéMON: DIAMOND/PEARL
Although the developers are still remaining tight-lipped on this one, we do know that it will be WiFi enabled and will be compatible with *Pokémon* GBA carts.
Out: 2006

IF YOU ENJOY NEATLY STACKING BLOCKS YOU'LL ENJOY CHUCKING THEM AT ASTEROIDS



METEOS™



DON'T PANIC! Ok Panic!

Can you stand firm as thousands of blocks rain down on you? Have you got the balls and the brain power to save the galaxy from asteroid storms?

Can your fingers dance across the screen to solve 30 frenetic puzzles? Do you love frantic? If the answer is 'yes' to any of the above you'll love Meteos.

"9 out of 10." NGC

NINTENDO DS™

open up and play



△ **With hamsters this cute, who needs Nintendogs?**

WIN A GAMEBOY MICRO

And a copy of Dr Mario & Puzzle League, only from **NGC**

Thanks to the good folk at Nintendo, we've found ourselves with five delightfully diminutive Game Boy Micros and five copies of *Dr Mario & Puzzle League* to give away. To be in with a chance of winning a Micro and the game, design your own faceplate on the form below and send it to us by November 24th. Here's the address:

Small ones are more juicy
NGC Magazine
30 Monmouth St
Bath
BA1 2PR

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO...

How do you get your mitts on the miniature miracle?
We want your to design a Game Boy Micro faceplate that'll make us clap like seals. Simply scribble your design on the Micro template below, cut it out and send it to us. Or if you don't want to cut up your mag, copy the form out onto a piece of paper.

LOOK! HERE'S MY LOVELY ARTWORK, AREN'T I TALENTED?

Name: ....

Address: ....

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Postcode: ....

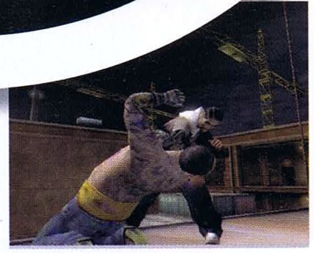
Favourite small thing: ....

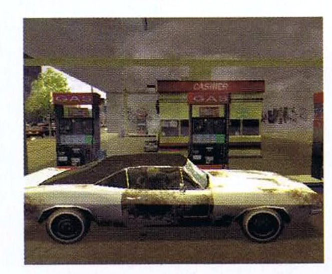
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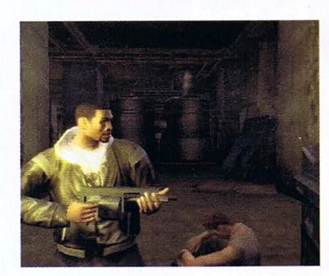
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ACTING CRIMINAL

True Crime has followed in GTA's footsteps by assembling a cast of credible Hollywood actors to do the voiceovers. Marcus will be voiced by Matrix star Laurence Fishburne, with Mickey Rourke and Christopher Walken also on the bill.





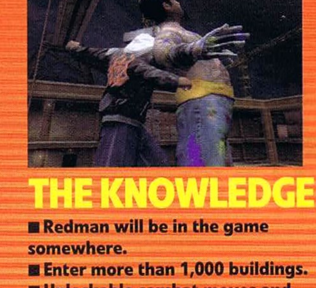




△ Just look that smooth criminal with his quiff and his shades. You just want to shoot him in the face already.

TRUE CRIME NEW YORK CITY

Graffiti, robbery and murder: it ain't Swindon.



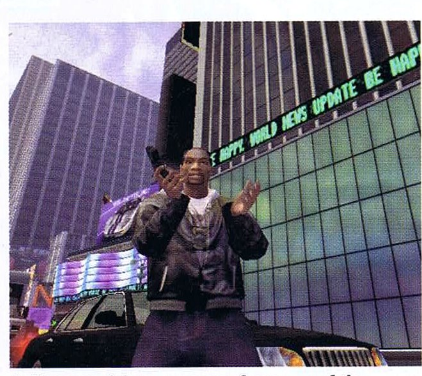
THE KNOWLEDGE

- Redman will be in the game somewhere.
- Enter more than 1,000 buildings.
- Unlockable combat moves and weapons.
- Drive over 80 vehicles.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Luxoflux

What have they done before?
True Crime: Streets of LA (NGC/88, 75%)
A decent crim sim. Almost ruined by a level which has you shooting a dragon. A *dragon*.



△ You can pick up weapons from any of the criminals that you arrest or kill.



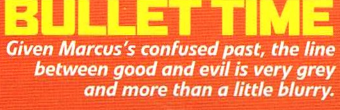
The 18 certificate earns its keep in the first five seconds when Marcus Reid's third word begins with an F, and his final word is a bullet to the face of some gangster who set him up. Nice. Then, just when you think it's all over, Marcus's dad shows up and kills another gangster. And now sit back and exhale... You might want to dig your fingernails out of the sofa, too.

This truly explosive opening aims to show us how things have moved on since we left the wisecracking, kung fu kicking Nick Kang in sunny Los Angeles. With

> "THE 18 CERT EARNS ITS KEEP IN THE FIRST FIVE SECONDS WITH A BULLET TO THE FACE"

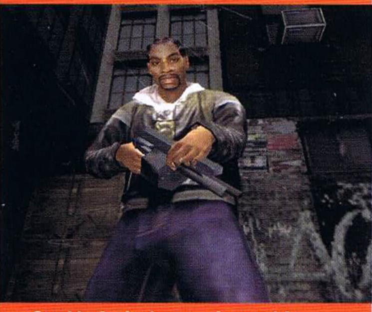
Cue all-out gang warfare with blood spraying thickly over the walls as the thud-thud of Uzi gunfire blasts out of the speakers.



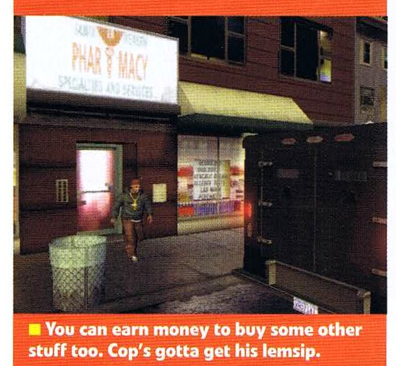


BULLET TIME

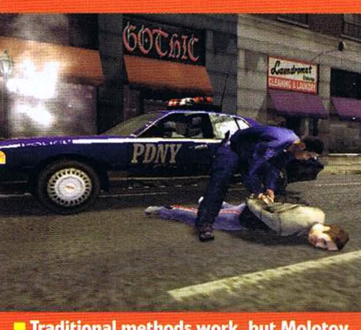
Given Marcus's confused past, the line between good and evil is very grey and more than a little blurry.



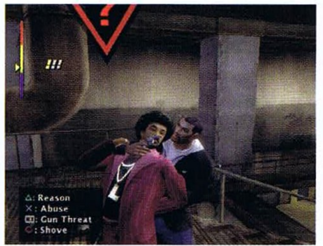
■ Good luck playing good cop with weaponry like this at your disposal.



■ You can earn money to buy some other stuff too. Cop's gotta get his lemsip.



■ Traditional methods work, but Molotov Cocktails and flamethrowers work better.



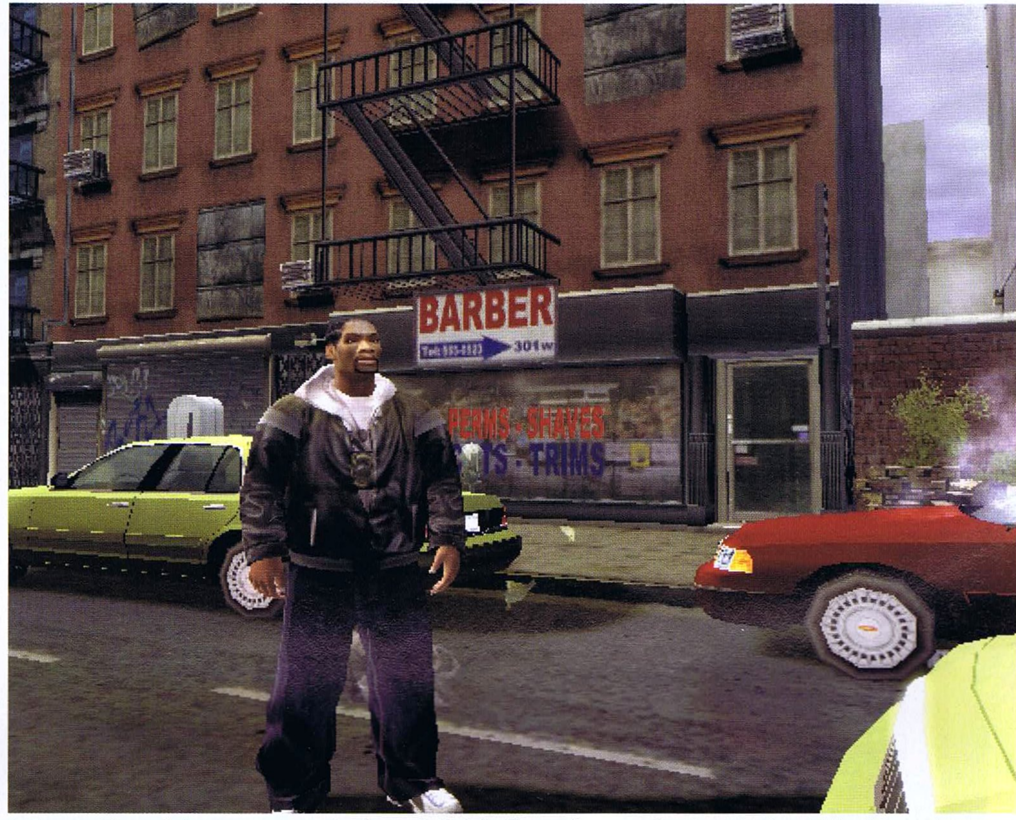
△ Reason or Gun Threat? Hmmm...



△ Torture: the hands off approach.



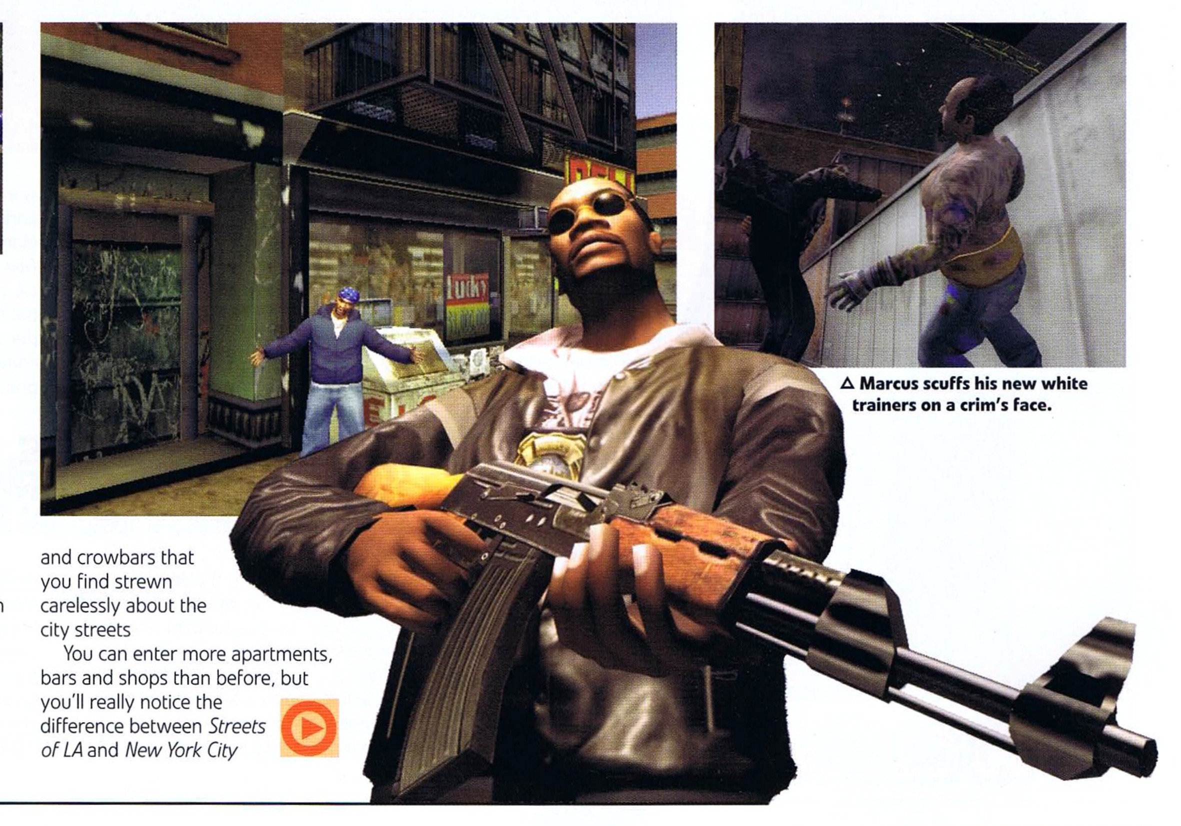
△ "Dude, that's not how you high-5."



△ The new job as a lollypop man was not going well. No lolly. No pop. Just a confused man in the middle of the road.



△ Back off boys, mum's home.

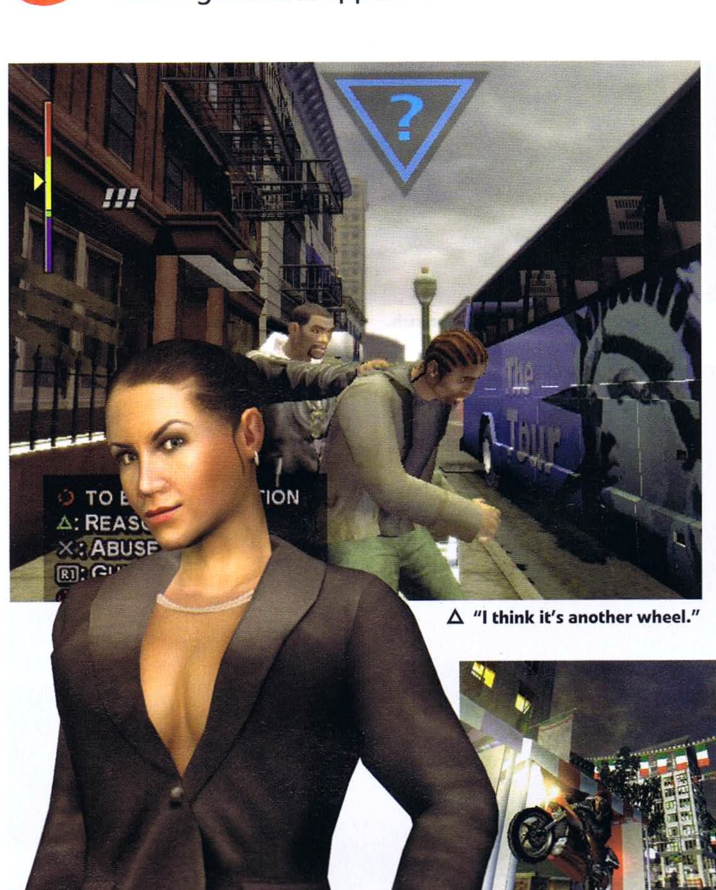


△ Marcus scuffs his new white trainers on a crim's face.

more blood, a higher body count and no more local news presenter gags, *True Crime: New York City* is aiming to be grittier, darker and tougher than its predecessor. You see, being an ex-gangster-turned-cop who goes back to his roots to beat up, arrest and, in most cases, kill the people he used to hang around with is no laughing matter.

It's especially unfunny for those on the receiving end of Marcus's impressive array of weapons, which can include anything from handguns and rifles to flamethrowers, rocket launchers and Molotov Cocktails. If you run out of bullets, you can still kill people using glass shards, spades and crowbars that you find strewn carelessly about the city streets

You can enter more apartments, bars and shops than before, but you'll really notice the difference between *Streets of LA* and *New York City*



△ "I think it's another wheel."



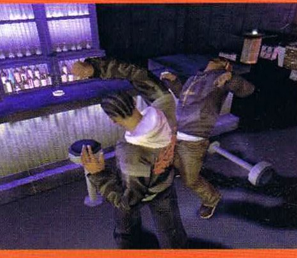
△ "Excuse me young man, but I find myself obliged to commandeer your vehicle."



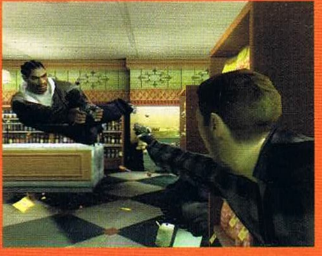


RUCKING OFF

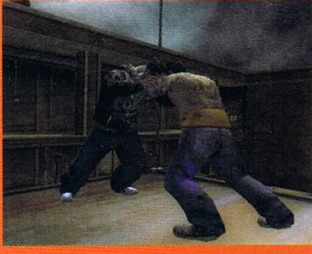
Okay, so, Marcus is no Nick Kang. He's more of a ruck 'n brawl man; easy on the charisma, heavy on the fist



Given the choice, Marcus Reid always likes to punch and grapple his enemies to the ground.



Much like in *Streets of LA*, you can earn new fighting moves at the Police Headquarters.



The fighting is grittier than last time, as your criminal-turned-cop protagonist fights dirty.

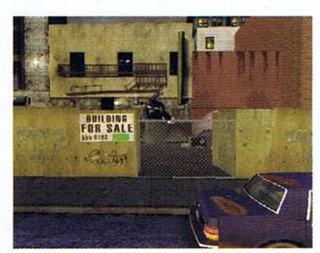
when you head outside and drive around the traffic-clogged avenues. Sprawling, flat and with no recognisable landmarks, going on a half-hour cruise through *LA* was never the thrill-a-minute experience we've come to expect from crime games, but all that has changed with the relocation. You'll be thankful for the new motorbikes as you weave in and out of rush-hour traffic and, although the landmarks are all here, you won't have time for so much as a glance at the Empire State Building when you're on a police chase through the midtown area. As in LA you can nick any vehicle on the streets, but seeing as this is New York and they actually *have* a public transport system, if you don't want to drive all the way from Harlem to Downtown, you can always jump on the subway. There's also the option to hail down a cab.

As in the last game, you'll receive calls telling you to solve crimes when you're driving around the streets and it's up to you to decide whether you want to be a good cop or a bad cop; a particularly interesting choice, given Marcus's shady criminal background. In *New York City*, as opposed to *Streets of LA*, your actions will not only affect you, but the environment too. If you ignore the calls telling you to solve a nearby crime, shops will start closing down, graffiti will appear on the buildings and, more importantly, the gangsters will move in. Driving around town might not be a whole lot of fun when you get your tyres shot out on the way to a mission. There's a benefit to being a good cop too as you'll earn cash which you can spend on new weapons, fighting moves and some East Coast

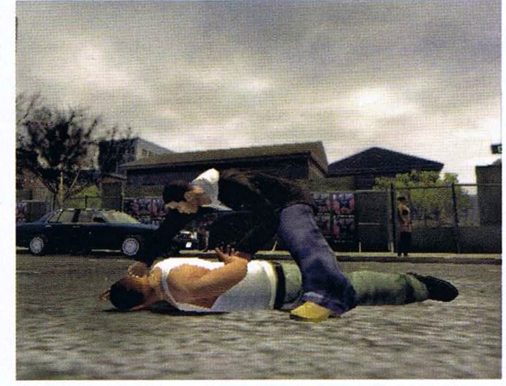
> **"AVOID THE FLAMES, KICK THEIR HEADS IN, AND BURN THEM BEFORE MOVING IN FOR THE KILL"**



Δ You can drive anything you want around New York City, so why would you choose this piece of crap?



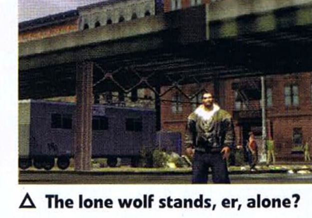
Δ Manhattan's looking so classy…



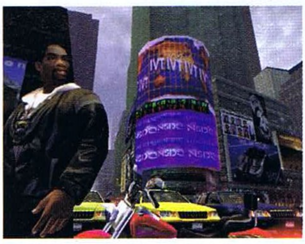
Δ You can beat up a criminal, steal his drugs, then sell them to gangsters. That's what I call a bad cop.



Δ "Okay, that's still not working. Hey wait I've got a better idea. Just put your left leg in… your left leg out… in out, in out, shake it all about…"



Δ The lone wolf stands, er, alone?



Δ You can ride some nice bikes.



Δ Look closely at this scene because you won't see it often: a good cop, just doing his job.

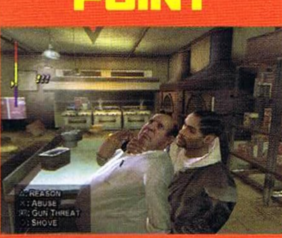
tunes for your jukebox. Anyone fancy some Jay-Z?

Yet, although the character and the location have changed, many of the missions are pretty similar. After the brutal twin-gun assault of the opening scene, the next level we played could have been straight out of *LA* as we had a brawl in a nightclub. Very similar to many of the Gulag scenes in *LA*, you're placed in a room with about ten goths who are attacking you with flaming torches. Avoid the flames, kick their heads in, nick their weapons and burn them back before moving in for the kill, sorry, we mean arrest. Then, once you've seen them off, as in *LA*, more goths will appear before you eventually have to take out the leader with your crowbar.

The shootout in the bank is all very familiar too. The first half is reminiscent of *LA*'s Going Up level, which also had you running through offices and using bullet time moves to gun down enemies. After you've stepped on the open lift to the top of the skyscraper it all changes though, as you gun down your enemies whilst moving slowly upwards, before finally facing the master criminal at the top. This bit is almost like a platformer as the criminal gets behind the controls of a crane and swings pipes around which you have to jump over or dodge. Just one hit and you'll fall all the way down to the bottom.

We've only played four missions, so it's still a bit early to say if *True Crime: New York City* will be as repetitive as *Streets of LA*, but they've certainly sorted out the irritating problems that plagued the last game. Look out for a review in the next issue.

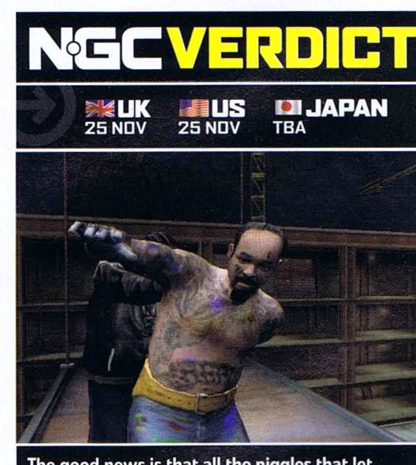
BOILING POINT



In *Streets of LA* you could either shoot criminals or arrest them, but now you can interrogate them – with a pan of boiling water. Start torturing them into submission and you'll see a meter telling you if you're going too far or if you need to apply more pain. So, if you meet a drug dealer, you could have a nice chat, or else just shoot him.

NGC VERDICT

UK 25 NOV | US 25 NOV | JAPAN TBA



The good news is that all the niggles that let down *Streets of LA* have gone. No more long drives through soulless urban sprawl, no more rubbish jokes and no more shooting bleedin' dragons. If you're hoping for *GTA* on Gamecube, you'll be disappointed as the fighting and shooting haven't changed that much, but it's still looking like a good crim sim.


ANTICIPATION RATING

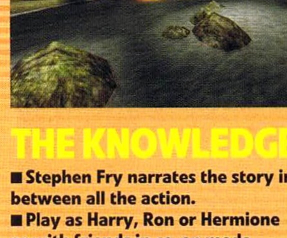


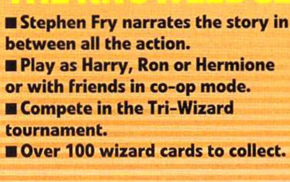


HP AND THE LIGHTSABRE

The art director for *Goblet of Fire* is none other than Alex Laurent, formerly a visual effects director who worked for George Lucas on *Star Wars: Episode 2*. He's also worked on *The Mummy* and *The Day After Tomorrow*.







THE KNOWLEDGE

- **Stephen Fry narrates the story in between all the action.**
- **Play as Harry, Ron or Hermione or with friends in co-op mode.**
- **Compete in the Tri-Wizard tournament.**
- **Over 100 wizard cards to collect.**



△ **When we were playing, Ron always seemed to get left behind – the buffoon.**

FACTFILE

- **Who's making it?**

EA

- **What have they done before?**

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (NGC/95 79%)
The first decent *Harry Potter* game in the series.

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

The one where the Boy who Lived faces You Know Who... Eh?

One-eyed wizards, Death Eaters and a few murders. No, we're not talking about a horror film, we're talking about *Harry Potter*. But no matter how much we're told that this game will be darker than ever, you're still fundamentally just dodging dragons on a broomstick.

Still, it does look like the most exciting *Potter* yet. Quickly skipping the first 100-odd pages of the book, Harry, Ron and Hermione are chucked straight into the action using their magic skills to escape from the Death Eaters and their Dugbogs. While never being actually scary it can get quite hairy, especially when about ten of these green lizard-like creatures all start nibbling your feet at once.

There are fewer tedious puzzles this time. It's all about the wizardry, so it's a good job the magic has improved. It's easy to jinx enemies, but using more advanced magic will earn you more beans. Besides, picking up a Dugbog with magic and lobbing it into the fire is much more fun than using a simple jinx.

The action continues in the Herbology Greenhouse with lilypads and bee-like creatures, although the most exciting level we played had Harry, flying on his firebolt, being pursued by an angry Horntail dragon. Not too bad at all.

> **"LOBBING DUGBOGS INTO THE FIRE WITH MAGIC IS MORE FUN THAN USING A SIMPLE JINX"**



△ **The third Tri-Wizard task where Harry has to fight through a maze.**



△ **Nice slacks, Potter. Funny, we've never seen a Next in Diagon Alley.**

NGC VERDICT





Given the escape from the Death Eaters, the Tri-Wizard Tournament and the final battle with Voldemort, *Goblet of Fire* is a far more action-packed book than *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, so it makes sense that EA has focused on combat this time around instead of tedious puzzling. While the last game was the first to get the *Potter* atmosphere spot on, visually, this is looking like the best one yet.

ANTICIPATION RATING





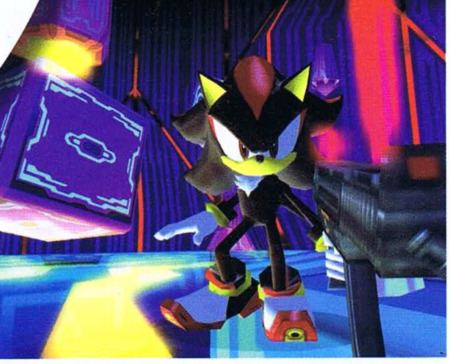


"EXPERIENCE THE FREEDOM TO LOSE CONTROL"
THE INCREDIBLE HULK
ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION
"A SURE-FIRE SMASH HIT"
OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE
Official XBOX Magazine ELITE
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PlayStation 2



SONIC YOUTH

Poor little Shadow – he's lost all his memories and is trying to find them. This may go some way to explaining his moral confusion as he lets you either lead him up the shining path of heroic righteousness, or else push him under the steely train of genocidal lunacy.

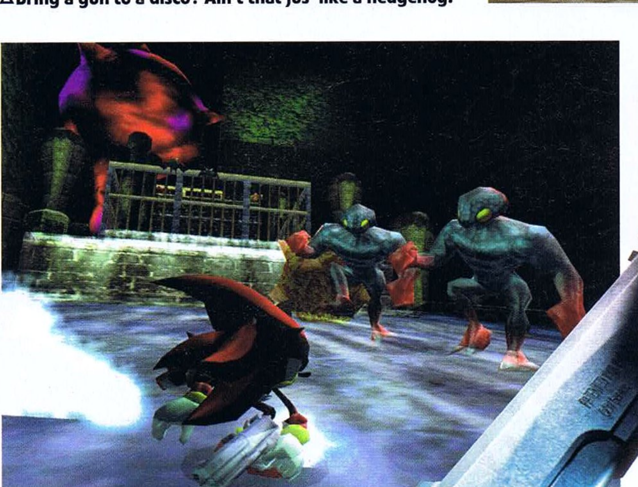


△ Bring a gun to a disco? Ain't that jus' like a hedgehog.



THE KNOWLEDGE

- Team up with the attacking aliens or the defending human army.
- Use new weapons and vehicles.
- Discover the fate of Dr Robotnik's niece, Maria. No, we're not joking.



△ Ally with the army or aliens? You decide.

FACTFILE

Who's making it?
Sega

What have they done before?
Sonic Adventure 2 (NGC/65, 70%)
The Gamecube's first *Sonic* game – ropy at best.

SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG

Armed and dangerous – this hedgehog's bad to the bone.



△ Get in there and bust Robotnik's pods.

It has, in fairness, improved since we last saw it, particularly in terms of the camera, which does now actually let you see what you're doing – something that can't be said for *DX* or *Battle*, the latter of which *Shadow* bears a passing resemblance to. Getting stuck into Westopolis (the game's opening level), for example, reveals some familiar things: a downward freefall with rows of rings to collect, your basic "jump then jump again" attack and Shadow's light and skatey movement and control. On first impressions, you could easily be fooled into thinking you're in for a very similar experience to *Sonic* – just with a different hedgehog.

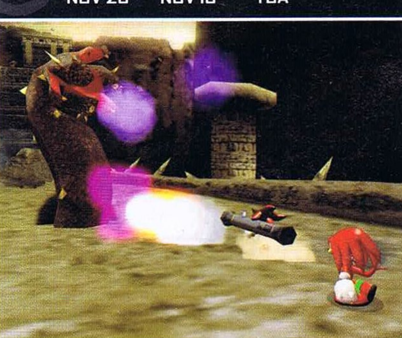
There's a lot more going on here though folks. Apart from Shadow's ability to pick up weapons, the most interesting new aspect comes out of the alien invasion at the start. You get to choose whether Shadow allies himself with the aliens or with the humans, fundamentally altering the path Shadow will take through the story.

There's also some rubbish in there about Dr Robotnik's niece 'Maria' and Shadow's dodgy past – but we'll come to that in the review next issue. Trust us, some things are best left alone.

> "YOU CAN CHOOSE WHETHER SHADOW WILL ALLY HIMSELF WITH ALIENS OR HUMANS"

NGC VERDICT

UK	US	JAPAN
NOV 25	NOV 15	TBA



The option to side with one faction or the other – or ignore them completely – will give plenty of scope for replaying levels. The added weapon abilities, while originally seeming like a silly idea, do actually add to Shadow's repertoire of moves and impact on the way you play. We're warming to it… slowly…

ANTICIPATION RATING






3

CLOSE TO DEATH.
FAR FROM LIVING.

15

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PAL 60Hz ONLY



HOW DO YOU FIGHT WITHOUT A BODY?

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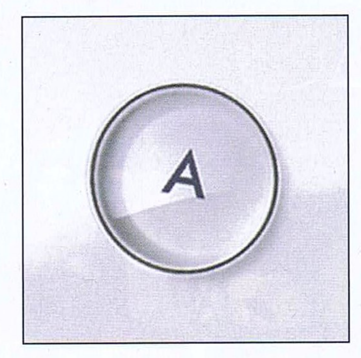
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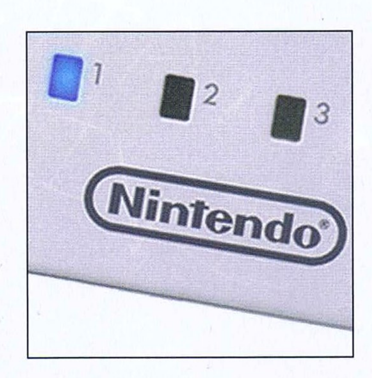


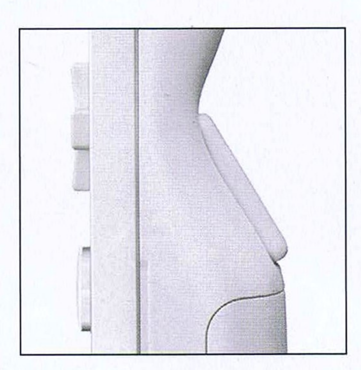
www.nintendo.co.uk











THE NEXT BIG THING?

REVOLUTIONARY

Nintendo's astonishing controller could be the best thing to happen to videogames.



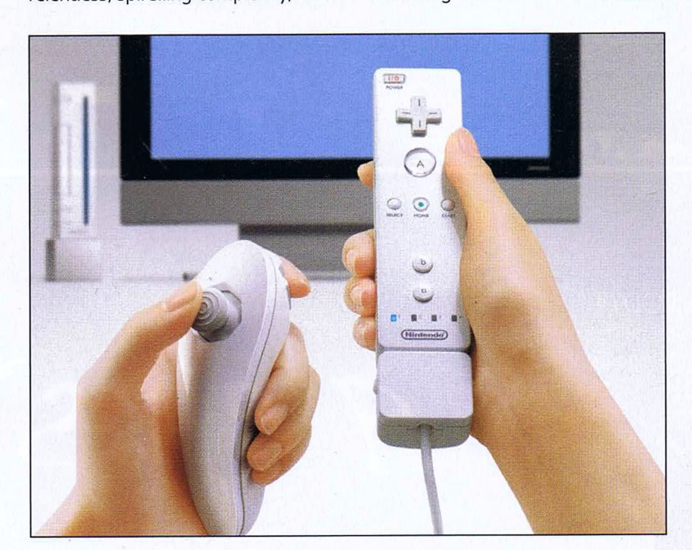
What is wrong with gaming today? Why is an industry with pretensions to mass-market, universal appeal saddled with a comparatively small, predominantly male audience? Why do most people never, ever play videogames?

Pick up a controller and you'll see what Nintendo believes is the cause of gaming's marginalisation. There are buttons all over the place, complete with arcane labellings and rarely used functions like the 'secret' click on the Gamecube's squeezy triggers or the pressure-sensitivity on the PS2 equivalent. They have two analogue thumbsticks when most folk can barely operate one with any sort of precision.

For the likes of us, the people who have grown up with gaming and become accustomed to its relentless, spiralling complexity, this is not a problem. But for anyone who can't program a DVD recorder, let alone point Luigi's torch in one direction while walking the opposite way in his Mansion – which is to say, the majority of the world's population – it's the reason consoles are perceived as something only teenage boys will ever understand.

As the first shots are fired in the next battle of the console wars, and both Microsoft and Sony send patched-up old warriors into the fray, Nintendo's response has been jaw-droppingly unexpected. Revolution's controller is the most radical innovation ever devised by a console manufacturer, and the downright ballsiest move we've had the privilege to witness – from the one company with the courage to launch products as disparate and unique as Virtual Boy, Game Boy, Famicom, and N64. Bring it on.

> **"THE MOST RADICAL INNOVATION IN CONSOLE HISTORY..."**



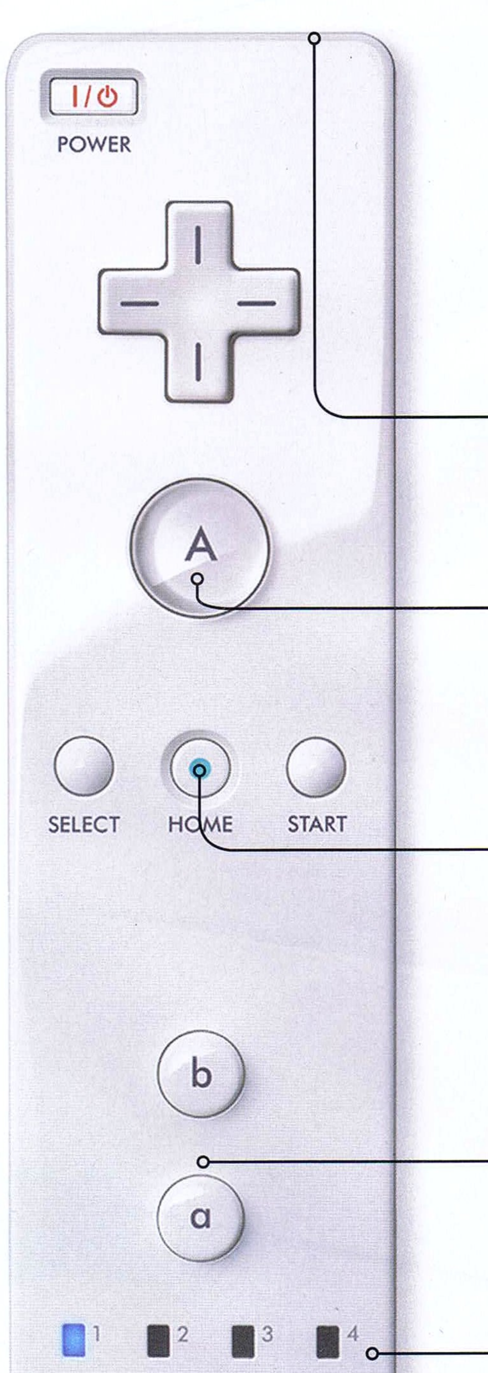



b
a
B
I/⏻
POWER
I/⏻
RESET
Nintendo
Nintendo

HOW IT WORKS

SELF CONTROL

Revolution marks the demise of the traditional twin-analogue handset





SENSOR

At the business end of the controller there's a little window that allows the technical wizardry inside to communicate with two small receivers placed next to the TV and connected to the Revolution console.

CONVENTIONAL CONTROLS

When using the controller in its one-handed 'wand' configuration, the only easily accessible controls are the D-pad, the A button and the B trigger. You'd need to use your other hand to hit the NES-style buttons below, which are ruled out when using the analogue nunchaku accessory.

HOME BUTTON

This function is still a secret, but we guess it will probably direct you to Nintendo's online portal, as well as accessing other options such as calibrating the controller.

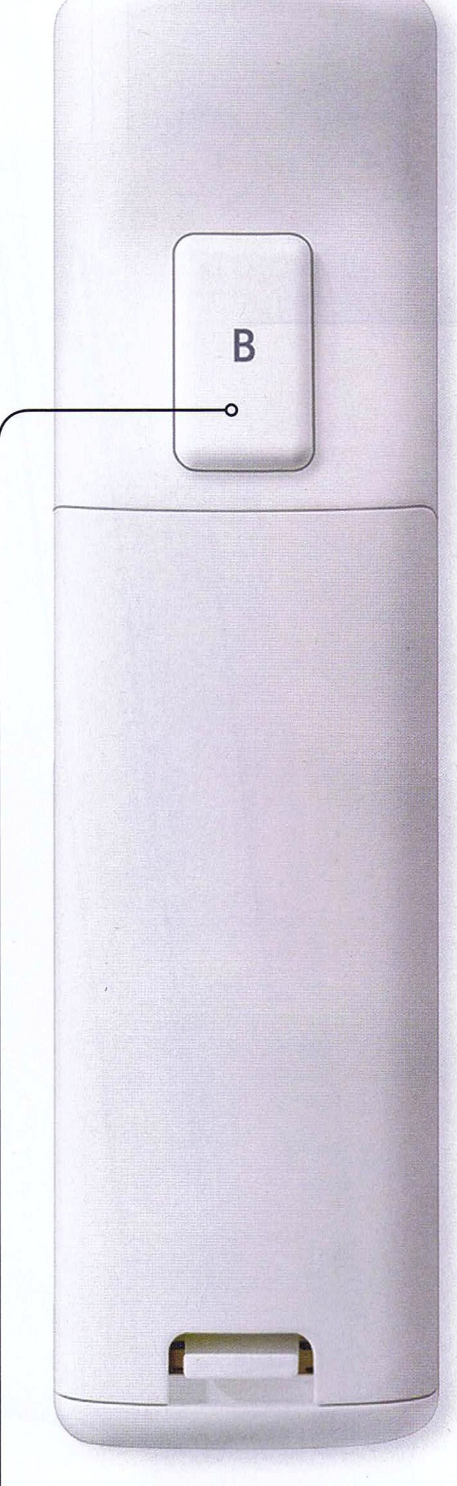


NES CONTROLS

Turn the controller on its side and you've got a close approximation of the original NES pad. That's where these two buttons come into play, although on the prototype seen in the video they were labelled X and Y.

CHANNEL INDICATOR

Shows which controller is assigned to which player. There's nothing to stop developers making games that demand a controller in each hand (eg the drumming demo shown on video) but Revolution will be only be able to track four controllers in total.



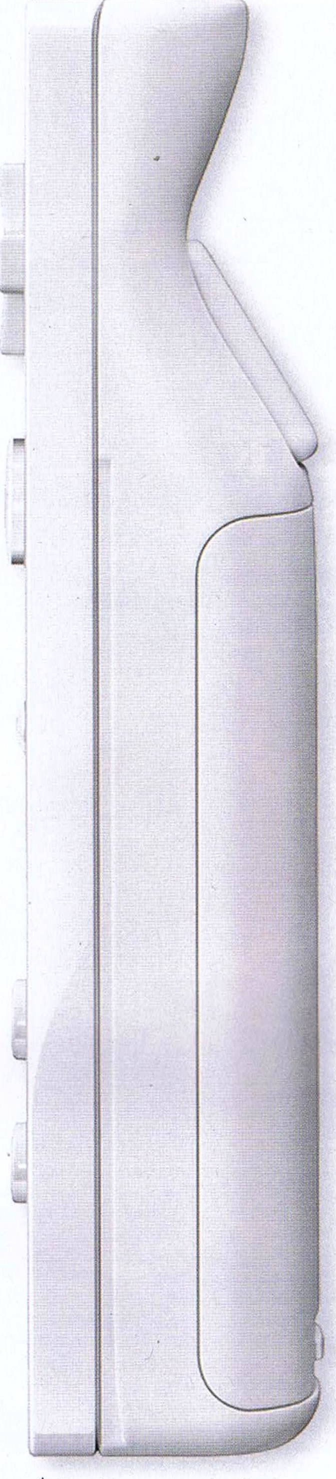


EXPANSION SLOT

The analogue nunchaku controller, which will probably be bundled with the console, fits here. Other potential accessories include a microphone headset and a 'classic' shell resembling an ordinary controller, into which the wand would be slotted sideways. Further shells and gadgets could be bundled with certain games.

B TRIGGER

The wand's sole concession to ergonomics is a brilliant throwback to the best feature of the N64 controller – the Z trigger. Bang bang!



△ Rumble comes as standard. They have yet to decide whether to power it by ordinary batteries or built-in rechargeables.



△ Any movement you make with your hand will be detected by the quantum flux generator inside Revolution.

MOTION SENSITIVE

MAGIC WAND

The controller explained. Sort of…



The wand, or 'freehand' controller as it was referred to in Nintendo president Satoru Iwata's Tokyo Game Show keynote speech, is the real reason the next console is codenamed Revolution.

Shaped like a TV remote, so as not to frighten mums, it's a motion-sensitive gizmo that works like a combination of 3D mouse and lightgun. You can point it at the screen to control a cursor, or twist and turn it to control pitch and yaw.

Nintendo demonstrated a simple flight game in which the controller was held like a toy aeroplane, with every hand movement replicated by the on-screen character. The controller also knows exactly where it is in 3D space, as demonstrated by a very basic fishing game in which 2D fish were picked up from a 3D background – moving it towards the screen made the fishing rod move towards the back of the 'pond'. We haven't the foggiest idea how it works, but it does its magic with incredible precision.

The potential of this genuinely revolutionary controller is expanded by the addition of extra peripherals which slot into a connector on the bottom. The only one shown at TGS was called the nunchaku, after the illegal-in-the-UK martial arts weapon, which added an analogue stick and a pair of Z triggers. Other peripherals, including game-specific add-ons and ornamental shells, may be released – Shigsy suggested a plastic aeroplane accessory for the aforementioned flight demo. Our heads hurt…



△ Four players with four nunchaku peripherals – super dangerous.



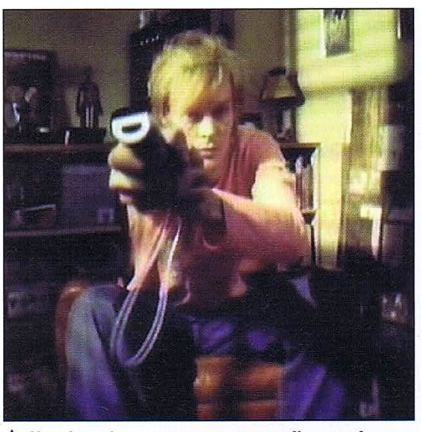
△ Two-player tennis or squash. Much potential for face-breakage.



△ Even the old folk love Revolution, as shown in this concert conductor demo.



△ Dental surgery – well, it does look a bit like an electric toothbrush.



△ Here's a nice young man pretending to play a first-person shooter on Revolution. Lucky bleeder.



△ This demo shows a two-player *Luigi's Mansion* sort of thing, with the wand controlling a torch on the screen.

FIRST-PERSON

Samus reborn at the Tokyo Game Show

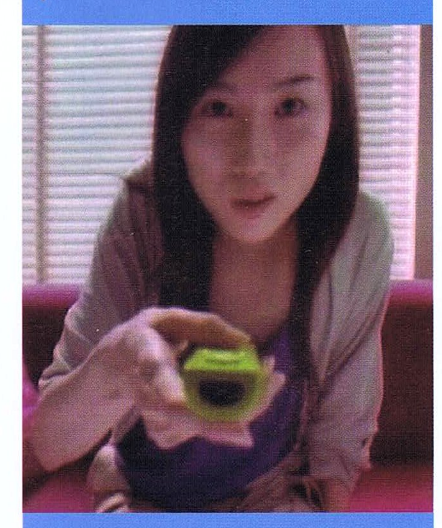
With the wand for looking around and the separate thumbstick for moving, Nintendo has created the perfect setup for first-person games – ironically, one of the least popular genres in Japan.

In the brief *Metroid Prime* demo shown behind closed doors at TGS, using a wired Revolution controller connected to a Gamecube dev kit, it was possible to circle-strafe and turn in mid-air with the kind of precision that was once only possible with mouse control. It's incredibly easy to use, and the old problem of accidentally staring at the floor/sky while trying to level the camera is gone – simply point the wand at the middle of the screen and you'll be looking directly ahead.

This control method has huge potential. You could move the wand towards the TV to zoom your sniper scope, or twist it to lean from side to side. The D-pad is perfectly positioned for switching weapons on the fly, the nunchaku thumbstick unit has two extra buttons for modifying other functions and the trigger button brings back happy memories of *GoldenEye* on the N64. People are going to wish they could connect this thing to their PCs for a spot of *Quake*.

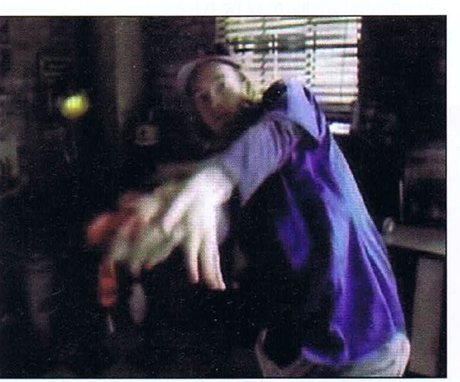
STRATEGY

Conquering the world with one hand in your pocket…



Imagine the wand as a laser pointer, selecting *Advance Wars* tanks and soldiers by gesturing towards them. Drawing a circle would select multiple units, while actions could be chosen by pointing at a row of icons on the screen. It's easy to see how effective this one-handed control system might be in a game like *Pikmin*. You could grab your veggiemen from one side of the screen and throw them to the other with a flick of the wrist, using the D-pad to cycle through different colours and holding the trigger to direct them around the map. PC-style strategy games, unwieldy on a standard controller, would find a natural home on a console for the first time.

DEVIL'S ADVOCATE



△ Baseball games, here we come!



Although the wand and its nunchaku thumbstick seem ideally suited to anything with a first-person camera – god games, sims, shooters etc – it's hard to see how effective the combo would be in many other applications.

Sports such as tennis and golf would be fine but what about football and fighting? How would you control a platformer, a third-person game or anything else that currently requires independent camera control and lots of actions?

Designing a brand new input device was a huge risk, and if it means that developers are going to have to devise brand new genres in order to fit on Revolution then Nintendo will find itself with a very shallow pool of willing/capable third parties. They're going to have to re-educate not only hardcore gamers, who have no problems with the current controllers, but also games developers who have neither the time nor the inspiration to work with something so unusual. How many third-party DS games make genuinely great use of the machine?

Nintendo's compromise is to have a separate shell resembling a normal controller, with the wand slotted inside. That way, you've got a wireless pad with a couple of sticks, loads of buttons and some motion-sensing functionality, which is what many people predicted for Revolution in the first place. If this becomes the standard way of controlling third-party titles or even Nintendo's own 'conventional' games then the wand runs a significant risk of being seen as a gimmick.



△ The small child will catch more fish using a bit of string and some cheese.





△ The 'pretty Japanese girl' controller attachment. Super!

ACTION

Revolutionising Wario Ware, Zelda and more

Nintendo's promo video showed people using the wand how to swing a virtual sword and tug on an imaginary fishing rod, both of which would be ideal for a *Zelda* game. Similar principles could be applied to other *Zelda* minigames such as archery, and many other quick and easy sideshows.

The mind boggles at the thought of what the *Wario Ware* team might come up with as a showcase for the new controller. Most exciting of all, *Mario Party 8* might actually be worth playing.

By turning the controller on its side, you could have NES-style controls while retaining some of the wand functionality. We guess that covering the sensor window with your hand would mean the Revolution wouldn't be able to track its exact position, but built-in tilt sensors would mean it could make a useful steering wheel or handlebar.

△ This chap appears to be playing a bit of *Zelda* or *Soul Calibur*.



△ Maybe he's using the wand and nunchaku to trim an invisible hedge.



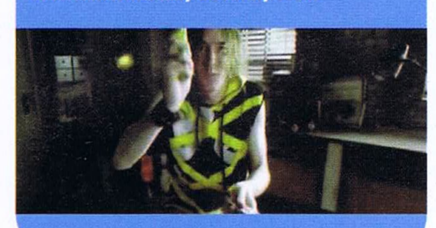
△ When playing like this, remove all breakable objects from the room.

TWO HANDERS

This is where it starts to get really weird

Holding a wand in each hand unlocks some intriguing possibilities. You'd have, in effect, two hands reaching into the game world, allowing you to operate control panels, manipulate objects and poke, prod and tweak things.

One hand could grab and move the environment while the other controls characters or items. The most obvious genre we can apply this to would be puzzle games like *Tetrisphere*, but the possibilities are limitless. But unless Nintendo includes two wands in the standard Revolution package, or extra wands that are cheap enough, this control method may be rarely seen.



DREAM MACHINE

Some might say gaming is stuck in a rut. When the giddying financial risks involved in games development mean that the only things worth producing are glossy sequels, there can be little doubt that innovation is becoming an increasingly rare commodity. Take next-gen consoles, for example.

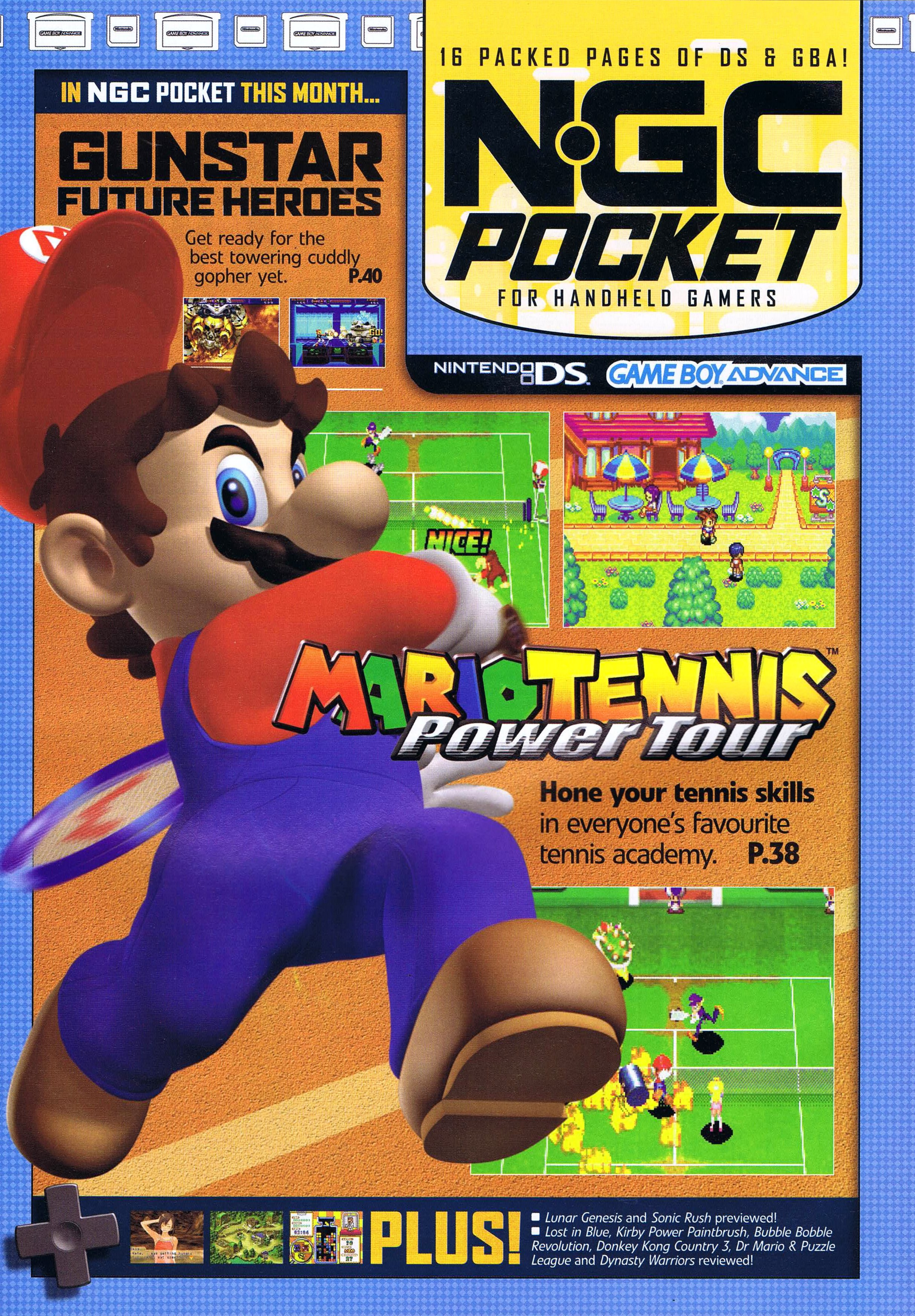
Honestly, who relishes the prospect of spending up to £300 on a machine that does exactly the same as the ones already sitting next to the TV, except with more colours and smaller polygons? Is it really worth the cash just to see some shinier cars and wetter rocks? And if you don't buy into it you can consider yourself an ex-gamer, because you'll have nothing new to play.

Standard gamepads have become as complicated as they can possibly get. Both Sony and Microsoft will be launching next-gen systems with almost exactly the same controller configuration as the original Playstation had; a decade-old design that stifles creativity and appeals exclusively to the existing hardcore.

Revolution's message is that mindless repetition is no longer acceptable and the exclusion of potential customers is foolish. A new console should offer new experiences, not incremental improvements – after all, once you're accustomed to a better standard of graphics, what else will the next generation have to offer? Maybe this is Nintendo's reaction to being left out in the cold by its rivals, but no matter what the cause, the result is a precious lifeline for originality in videogames.



△ The analogue nunchaku has two Z triggers.


16 PACKED PAGES OF DS & GBA!
NGC POCKET
FOR HANDHELD GAMERS
IN NGC POCKET THIS MONTH...
GUNSTAR FUTURE HEROES
Get ready for the best towering cuddly gopher yet. P.40
NINTENDO DS
GAME BOY ADVANCE
NICE!
MARIO TENNIS Power Tour
Hone your tennis skills in everyone's favourite tennis academy. P.38
PLUS!
Lunar Genesis and Sonic Rush previewed!
Lost in Blue, Kirby Power Paintbrush, Bubble Bobble Revolution, Donkey Kong Country 3, Dr Mario & Puzzle League and Dynasty Warriors reviewed!

NGC POCKET

NEWS • NEWS • NEWS • NEWS

DREAMING OF A WI-FI CHRISTMAS

Nintendo's brilliantly simple online strategy revealed.

Nintendo's online service now has an official name – the Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection – and also has a price: absolutely nothing. It's free to use, but we knew that already. What's news, however, is that the company is going the extra mile to make sure that its Wi-Fi facility is the most accessible around.

If you've got a functioning broadband internet connection, but haven't got a wireless network, then Nintendo is releasing a peripheral to turn your computer into a conduit for the DS's online powers. The Nintendo Wi-Fi USB Connector costs £30 and slots straight into your computer's USB port, giving you instant access to a world of opponents and team mates.

As well as this dongle, Nintendo will be showering the UK with Wi-Fi 'hot spots'; areas where wireless internet access is provided for anyone able to make use of it – the DS demo pods in your local game shop, for example. And, expect a number of these hot spots to be in place ready for when the service is launched in the UK on November 25th, when both *Mario Kart DS* and the USB dongle will be released.





HOW MUCH?

As much as we like Nintendo's uncomplicated approach to pushing Wi-Fi gaming to the masses, we would also like to know the specs behind its USB dongle. While we have no doubts about its ability to facilitate the online aspect of DS, we have plenty of questions that need answering, as should you. Is it secure? Can we use it only with a DS? If not, is it really worth the money when compared to other wireless products out there? Join us next month, dongle fans, as we find out the answers…

WELCOME TO NGC POCKET…

We all know that, in Japan, the DS reigns. And if it's been reigning up to now, it's about to start pouring, with Nintendo announcing a range of software that will very nearly double the machine's catalogue of games in the near future. Some of them sound excellent from the off – *Mario Basket 3x3, Xenosaga DS, Tales DS* – while some sound just plain weird. *Tingle RPG*, anyone? A *whole game* based on the high-pitched prancing of the *Zelda* character that you love to hate? Still, if nothing else, you'll have no trouble keeping warm in the winter months, provided you keep the DS charger nearby.

And then, as if, y'know, three million games weren't enough, Nintendo goes and unveils its 'plan' for turning the DS into a conduit for online gaming. We say 'plan' because we're not sure if it's complex enough to be classed as a plan – you either use Nintendo's free wireless service through an existing network, or else turn your broadband PC into one with a small dongle. *Mario Kart DS* is coming out the same day as the dongle – what better way to test the quality of the online service than with that little baptism of fire, eh?

So, this *Tingle RPG*…hands up who likes the Tingle? Hmmm? C'mon. Hmmm.

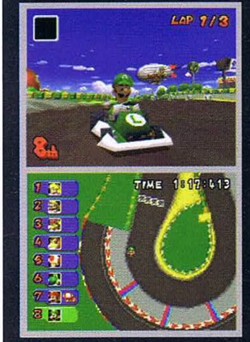
Geraint Evans, will sing for food



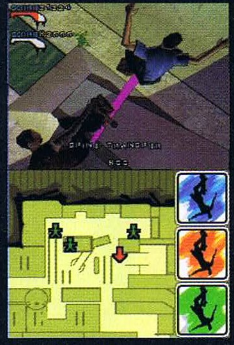
NGC POCKET, NGC Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW
Issue 10, October 2005
Editor: The Little Welshy
Contributors: Mr Surfer Man, Hello Kittsy, The Blue Flash, The Norwich Hobbit

ONLINE-UP

There are six hunters to choose from in multiplayer mode and Nintendo have revealed three new ones, Sylux, Trace and Weavel. Finally, Nintendo and Wi-Fi get wed. And here's what their kids will look like.



Mario Kart DS
Due: Nov 25 (UK), Nov 14 (US)
If you don't understand the excitement surrounding the prospect of online *Mario Kart*, then you've likely never played *Mario Kart*. If so, then you've no excuse – NO EXCUSE GRAHR – for avoiding it this time around. Get over your terror and ride your way to success.



Tony Hawk's American Sk8land
Due: Nov 14 (US), Nov tbc (UK)
The DS instalment of the latest Tony game has slickly stylised visuals that have been created especially for it. *Tony Hawk's* games always make for raucous multiplayers, packing in appropriate amounts of swearing and showing off.



Animal Crossing: Wild World
Due: Dec 5 (US), Early 2006 (UK)
There's a whole new world of towns out there: invite three people to come and stay 'n' play in your hometown, or just go and visit someone else's. This could blow the game's collection aspect into the stratosphere…



Metroid Prime Hunters
Due: Early 2006 (US/UK)
Late, but not least, Samus' shooter is due to become a reality in early 2006. Far more than just a simple deathmatch game, Hunters could well tussle with *Mario Kart* for Wi-Fi killer-app status. It'll be just the thing to get the adrenaline flowing after a session of Nintendogging.





LOADS AND LOADS

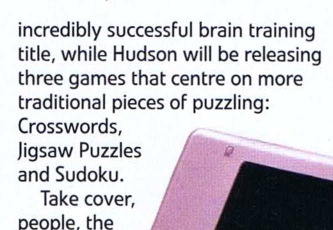
DS avalanche announced – keep the charger handy…



With the DS gaining such momentum in Japan, it's only natural that its software catalogue begins to follow suit. And so this month sees the announcement of not just a mere handful of DS games, but actually a whole shopful; some weird, some obvious and some just a little bit too niche to see release over on these shores.

Still, hold on tight – it's not as if the list given below is anywhere near comprehensive. On top of the grid of goodies you can see new *Phoenix Wright* and *Castlevania* games, plus *Custom Robo* and *Gundam* on DS. Nintendo will also be producing a sequel to its incredibly successful brain training title, while Hudson will be releasing three games that centre on more traditional pieces of puzzling: Crosswords, Jigsaw Puzzles and Sudoku.

Take cover, people, the avalanche is about to strike…





△ **SUPER PRINCESS PEACH – 'er from *Mario* gets her own game.**



△ **TINGLE RPG – Tingle, eh? Isn't he like the Jar-Jar of the *Zelda* world?**



△ **TALES DS – Namco's quality action RPG series should be entertaining.**



△ **CONTACT – An RPG from the busted brains behind *Killer 7*? Curious…**



△ **MARIO BASKET 3x3 – With the other balls done, it's b-ball's turn.**



△ **KAITOU WARIO – A platformer based on Wario's thieving antics.**



△ **LEGEND OF STAFI 4 – Popular Ninty property we never see in the UK.**



△ **XENOSAGA DS – The fantastic PS2 RPG defects to DS. Be excited.**



△ **TENCHU DS – Likeable assassination series does stealth on two screens.**



△ **PUYO PUYO FEVER 2 – Follow-up to the bean-jiggling puzzler.**



△ **MUSHIKING DS – Sega's weird but super-popular beetle fighting game.**



△ **LOST MAGIC – Taito's RPG will let you cast spells via stylus movements.**

NEWS WIRES





BREAK THE SILENCE

First up, a soggy mouthful of new details torn straight from the rump of *Biohazard: Deadly Silence* on DS. Those first-person knife fights we showed you in Pocket News last month are triggered automatically as and when the game wants you to go toe-to-toe with an enemy. Plus, Capcom intends to include some kind of multiplayer function into the game, for up to four DS owners able to come together in a manner that's not yet been revealed. Deathmatch? Co-operative puzzle solving? Will some players get to *be* the zombies? Here's hoping…

FINAL FANTAS-THREE

Good things come in threes, thinks Square Enix. In addition to the recent announcement of *Final Fantasy IV* for GBA, company president Yoichi Wada revealed that three more *FF* remakes for Nintendo handhelds are in the works: *Final Fantasys V* and *VI* will also be appearing on GBA. More curious, however, is the announcement that *Final Fantasy III* will be coming to DS, now with 3D visuals that – Wada claims – will do justice to the machine. Not that we feel the DS is wrongly accused, or anything.

ASH YOU WERE

Keeping things in a *Final Fantasy* flavour, Mistwalker – the studio formed by *FF* creator Hironobu Sakaguchi after leaving Square Enix – will be crafting an RPG for DS, named *ASH*. It's a clumsy acronym (*Archaic Sealed Heat*), but looks like it'll turn out to be beautiful, thanks to character designs and a soundtrack from the folk who've produced such things for several previous *FF* games. Published by Nintendo, *ASH* has 3D visuals that are touted as being more realistic than you'd expect from a DS RPG, with the top screen showing a birds-eye view of the play area and the lower screen showing an over-the-shoulder-of-your-character perspective of the action.

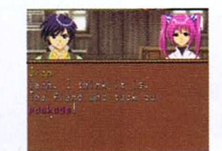




△ Standing still in a line is one way to explore each new area. Probably not the best way, though.

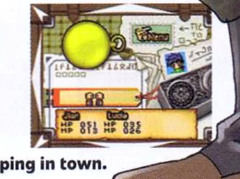
△ If you want strange-looking clogs, this is your game.





△ Ooh those naughty package-filching fiends.





△ Beats late night shopping in town.

△ So many areas to explore, but where's the toilet?

△ You can run away from battles, but the word "chicken" will haunt you…

LUNAR GENESIS

From: GAME ARTS **Out:** NOVEMBER

First it's coming, then it's not, then it decides to make it over here after all – this time courtesy of Rising Star Games, deciding (and rightly so) to bring the DS its first RPG. True, it's not exactly the best-known series, but it has a perfectly respectable lineage, first with *Silver Star* on the Mega CD and then following on the Playstation with *Eternal Blue*, picking up plenty of fans and something of a cult following in the process.

Lunar Genesis, then, is a prequel to the two *Lunar* games, taking place 1,000 years before the original. It follows the story of Jian and Lucia, a pair of couriers who find themselves mixed up in a conflict between the once peaceful humans and beastmen. From what we've played so far, *Lunar* seems a solid enough RPG – not as initially breathtaking as we would have hoped (the artwork, while nice enough, isn't quite up to Game Arts's usual standard, for example) but there are still a number of unique little features on display here.

On the surface it seems like a pretty streamlined RPG. The town, for example, isn't a fully explorable affair. Instead, you're given an overview of the location with a number of highlighted areas to visit (like shops and houses and so forth) and selecting one will take you there – which, in our eyes, could well restrict the overall sense of place you get in RPGs like *Golden Sun*.

The same rule applies to the overworld itself, and selecting a location (more and more unlock as you progress) takes you to a play field where you can go about the process of exploring, interacting with NPCs and battling. The game world, then, is more instanced than your traditional RPG fare.

The battle system is also of some interest and worth mentioning here. Firstly, you can, if you choose, avoid encounters with enemies, as you can see them roaming around the fields. Should you wish to escape, your character has a run function that can be used at the expense of health (the jury's still out on how irritating this system will be down the line). Actually entering battles themselves also provides an unusual choice. You can fight either for the benefit of earning EXP or to earn items. You can't do both simultaneously – you have to decide in advance, something that could well introduce some interesting strategies later on in the game. The only thing we weren't too happy with was the inability to choose which enemy your character could attack – it just seemed to be unnecessarily restrictive. Hmmm…

We'll leave off the review until next month while we penetrate deeper into the game, but so far it'd be fair to say that we have mixed feelings about its overall quality.

"SHOULD YOU WISH TO ESCAPE, YOUR CHARACTER HAS A RUN FUNCTION THAT CAN BE USED"

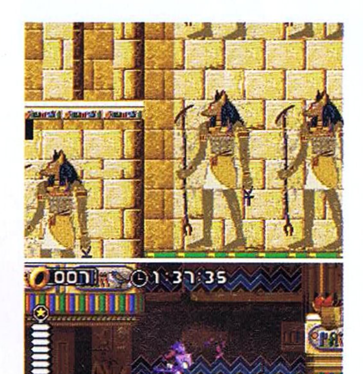


Boss encouters bring a variety of new perspectives to the action…





Blaze the Cat is Sonic's new ally. Not as quick, but some fiery attacks.



As ever, each set of Zones have distinct (yet familiar) themes.

SONIC RUSH

A new look and a rather welcome to return to form…

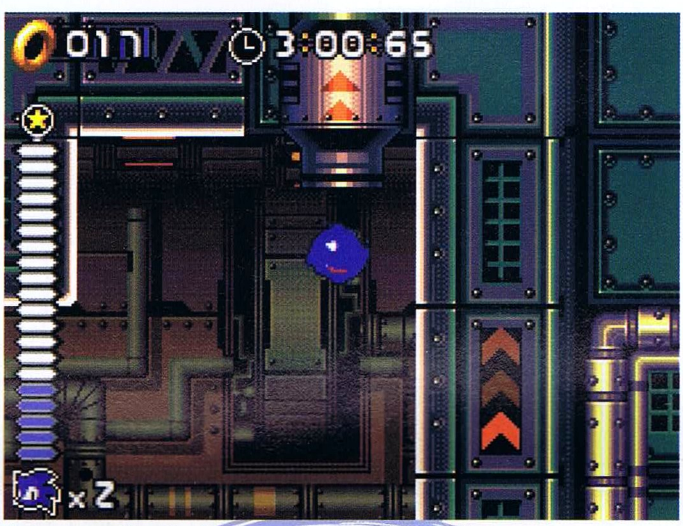
From: SEGA **Out:** NOV 25

If ever proof was needed that Sonic is more at home simply running from left to right, *Rush* is as good an example as any. Whilst being more traditional than *Shadow* and *Adventure* it will feel familiar, but with some obvious differences.

You've got the dual screens, for starters – which means any high speed travelling up and down vertical ramps tends to send you rocketing or plummeting between the two. It feels a bit odd at first because you have to keep an eye on both screens simultaneously, but once you get your eye in, you'll find the new view offers something a little fresh. Levels are now much bigger in scope, and the fact that you have a bigger view of the action makes spotting alternative paths or missed objects easier.

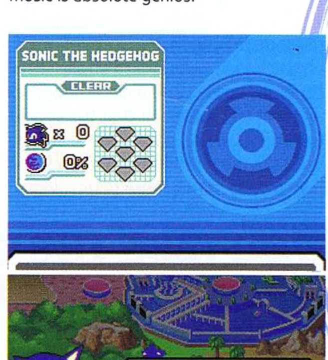
So far, we've only managed to get to Act 2 of the fourth zone – apparently there are seven in total, each broken up into two acts and a boss battle. Each one has its own distinctive theme and shows off Sonic's new 3D polygonal form off in different ways. The ramps, flippers and slides, for example, now fling Sonic closer and farther away from the screen, giving a better sense of depth, making this *easily* the best-looking 2D Sonic so far. Sonic's speech is limited to the odd 'Wah-hey!' and 'Yeah!' (as opposed to the petulant teenager dialogue from the *Adventure* games) and we're pleased to say that the music is absolute genius.

> "THIS IS VERY EASILY THE BEST-LOOKING 2D SONIC SO FAR"



The bar on the side of the screen shows your charge for a special boost.









△ The jungle is a long way from your original camp – and getting Skye there (alive) is a real pain in the backside, but there are loads of fruit and resources to be found here.

△ Your thirst, hunger and energy meters deplete very rapidly, so be careful.

LOST IN BLUE

FROM: KONAMI **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
MICROPHONE: YES **OUT:** NOW (US), NOV 25 (UK) **COST:** $30 (£17)

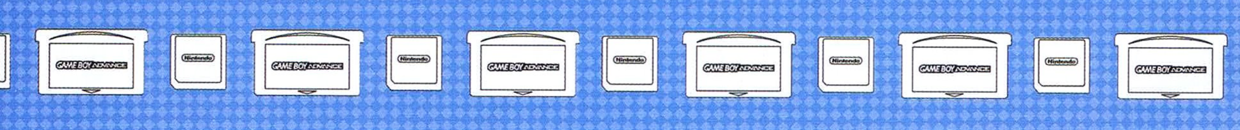
A laborious search for food, water and companionship. Just like life.

You find yourself stranded on a beach with nothing but your clothes and a backpack. You're hungry and thirsty, wet and tired, and the only thing you can do is wander around in search of food and shelter. An investigation of the immediate area turns up some coconuts, which manage to alleviate your thirst long enough to find some bark and twigs. A nearby cave gives you enough shelter to start your first fire. You end your day alone, exhausted.

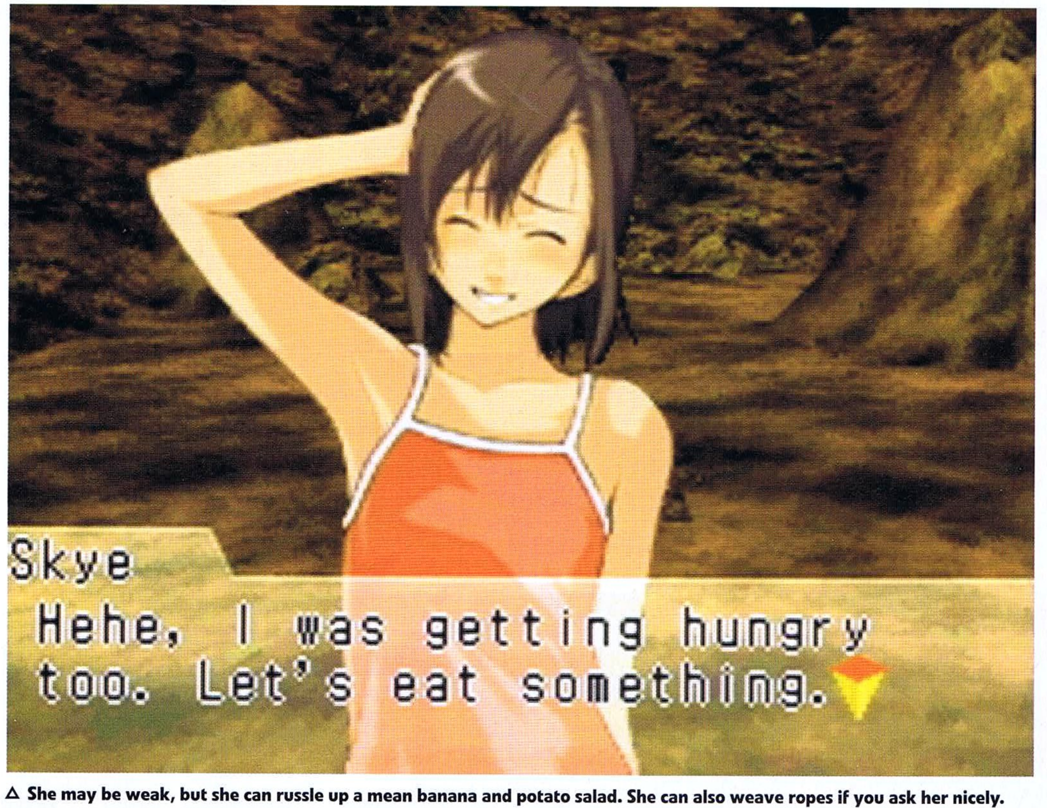
The following day brings more discoveries in the form of a girl on the beach, who is also stranded, a couple of stones and a clean supply of water. It's at this point that the game begins to take on some sort of shape. You take the girl by the hand and lead her to your cave, where your roles become apparent (easy tiger – not *that* apparent). Being the boy of the piece, it's up to you to do the hunting and gathering, as well as help your companion move around the island. As for the girl, well, she's practically blind – you may as well leave her in the cave to do the cooking. Seriously, we're not kidding.

Sexist stereotyping aside, *Lost in Blue* is initially charming although incredibly tough going. Managing your items and trying to get the most nourishment you can out of your scant resources is actually pretty tricky. You can't explore too far because you get too hungry and tired, which means that the game starts exceptionally slowly – painfully so, if the truth be told. It's often downright infuriating, and you'll

> "YOU TAKE THE GIRL BY THE HAND AND LEAD HER TO YOUR CAVE"

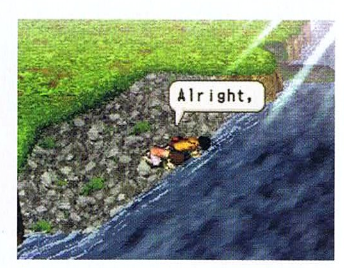












△ **She may be weak, but she can russle up a mean banana and potato salad. She can also weave ropes if you ask her nicely.**

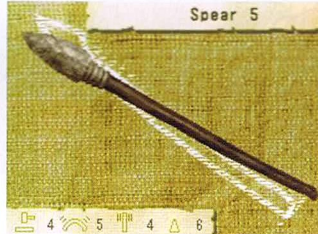
TOOLS OF THE TRADE: LIVE AND LEARN



The first tool you make (from twigs and bark) lets you build a fire to dry your clothes and allows Skye (your female companion) to do some cooking. Shame there's no telly to watch the cricket on in the meantime really.



In order for the lady of the house, er, cave, to be able to cook, you need to gather some food. Different ingredients vary in nutritional value – you should experiment to find the healthiest combinations possible.



Some foods can be found through exploration of the area – others need to be aquired with specific tools. A spear or rod, for example, will allow you to catch some fish. Healthier than the local chippie, if only there was one…



You'll also need to make your cave more comfortable. Building a bed, for example, will help you regenerate more energy at night. We're still hoping for a secret level to unlock which provides a waterbed and satin sheets.

probably find that you want to give up after a few hours' play. Searching for random scraps of seaweed to eat and figuring out which mushrooms aren't going to kill you just feels like really hard work and, unless you have the innate patience of a saint, the game's unnecessarily clumsy interface could well have you thoroughly despising *Lost in Blue* only a few brief moments after you start playing it.

But then, this *is* about survival and perseverance, and those with the staying power to get past the game's relentlessly laborious aspects can reap huge rewards. The slow-burning nature of the action, for example, whilst inciting you to weep tears of bitter exasperation, does make any discoveries and progress (no matter how small) feel ludicrously exciting. Any new item you find could help fashion a better tool, which means better food for you and your companion, which in turn means less time just sitting in a cave eating it. You become more efficient, you understand how best to manage your time and, eventually, *Lost In Blue* threatens to be quite enjoyable.

There's something hugely endearing and almost primal about *Lost in Blue*: watching your little settlement evolve from basic squalor to something a little more homely, bringing back a kill from a hunt or unravelling the overarching mystery of the island, bit by bit, day by day. Just when things start to feel like a chore, another discovery brings an interesting new feature or new way of exploring and hunting and, before you know it, you start to feel a strange sense of ownership about the island that once felt so hostile.

It's odd because, technically speaking, *Lost in Blue* is a very annoying, often clumsy little game, but the emotions it often invokes – the feelings of hardship, reward and companionship – are, at times, second to none, making it very much worth the laborious effort.

GERAINT EVANS

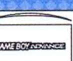
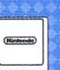
DUAL ★★★
TOUCH ★★★★
4



△ **You break Skye's glasses here, so she can't see your ugly face.**

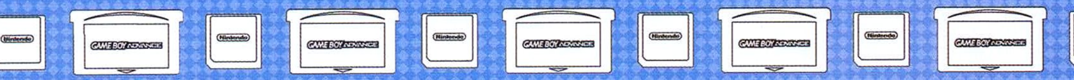


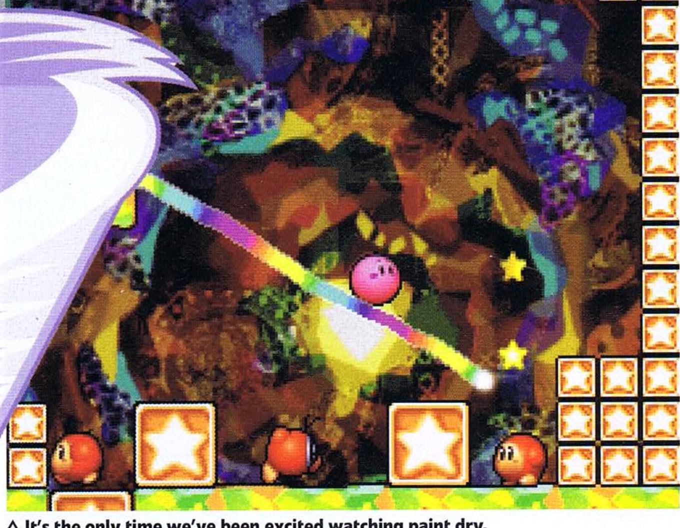


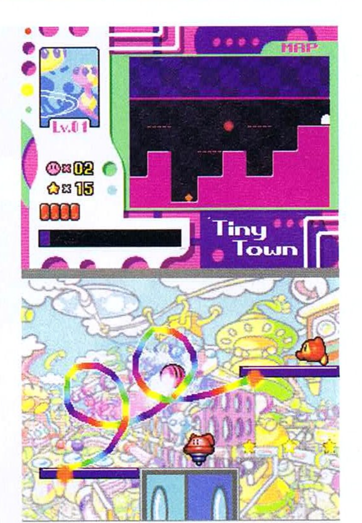






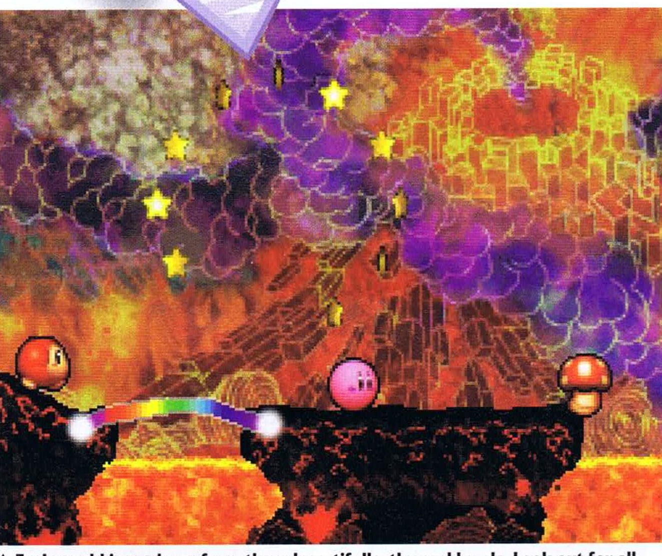


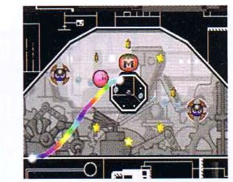


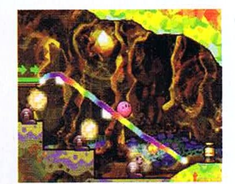


△ It's the only time we've been excited watching paint dry.



△ Use loops to make Kirby speed up, and take him higher.


△ Each world is made up from three beautifully-themed levels. Look out for all those medals and exits – using the map is key.





KIRBY POWER PAINTBRUSH


FROM: NINTENDO **MICROPHONE:** NO **PLAYERS:** 1 **OUT:** NOV 25 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **COST:** £30



△ Balloon Kirby can be burst to stun nearby enemies.

Still good? Scrub that – it's a brushstroke of genius.

Japan knows it as *Touch! Kirby*, the US knows it as the less friendly *Kirby: Canvas Curse* – ggrrrrr – but Kirby's excellent platforming title finally makes it to the UK as *Power Paintbrush*. Not that it *really* matters, not when everyone's favourite testicle stars in a game that's so well-constructed and delightful to play.

You're part player, part designer and part rainbow-obssessed graffiti artist, in what is one of the most instant and rewarding uses of the DS's touchscreen. It's simple enough: use your stylus to draw spangly barriers, ledges and ramps to guide and deflect Kirby as he rolls in whatever direction you point him in, while enemies and obstacles can be tapped with the stylus to neutralise them. Also, once he's stunned enemies, Kirby can nick their power-ups, so he can do a super dash or inflate and glide through the air.

It's stuffed with replay value, with hidden medals to find, four mini-games to master, including a fun join the dots-style game, and a handful of characters besides Kirby to re-experience the game with.

> EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE TESTICLE STARS IN A GAME THAT'S DELIGHTFUL TO PLAY

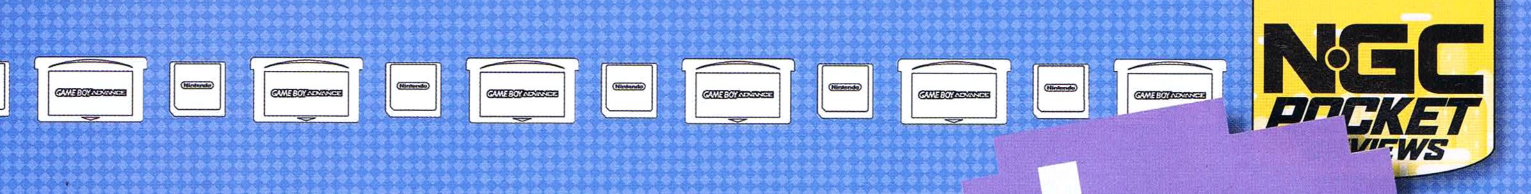
It's what we were expecting from *Yoshi's Touch & Go* really; a truly substantial 2D platformer for the DS, with dozens of obstacles and enemies scattered through every single level. And *Power Paintbrush* features the kind of intricacy that brings back slight (but sweet) memories of *Yoshi's Island* on the SNES. The music is amazing, too.

We reviewed this on import in issue 107, where Geraint raved about the soundtrack – rest assured, he wasn't just trying to pass some twee, tinkly-bop madness off as lovable weirdness. It is indeed very, very nice.

However much you've been annoyed by *Kirby*'s career lows over the past year or two, *Power Paintbrush* is a certified lovely, a novel spin on platforming that has 'classic' written all over it. Well, almost – we only got as far as 'clas' before running out of paint.

STEVEN BAILEY

DUAL ★★★★
TOUCH ★★★★★
5



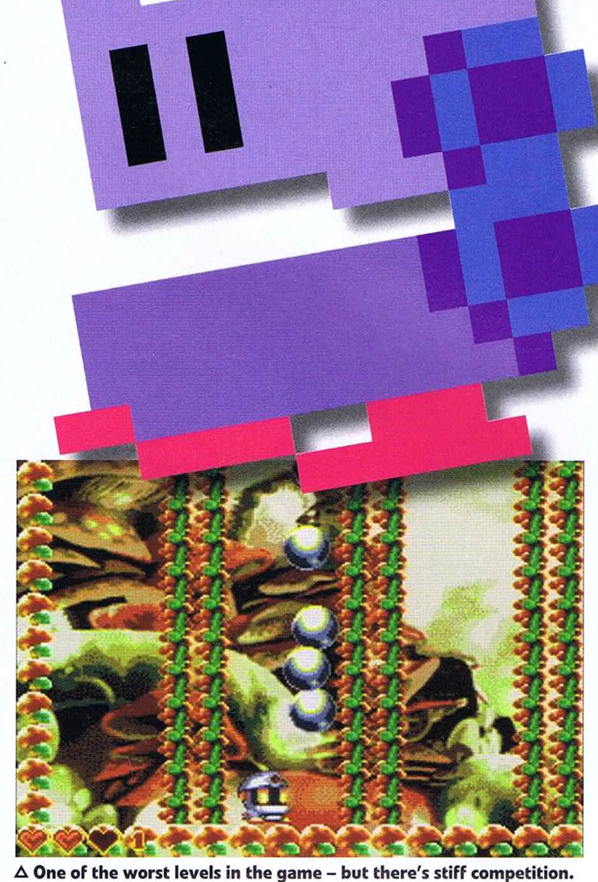


△ Under-platform spikes – suitably irritating.





△ Poor old original *Bubble Bobble*. Wasted.



△ One of the worst levels in the game – but there's stiff competition.

BUBBLE BOBBLE REVOLUTION



△ You can be a pink dino if you want. They all have the same 'angry' face.

FROM: RISING STAR **PLAYERS:** 1-2 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **MICROPHONE:** NO **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £30

Emotional gaming – this one nearly made us cry



Bubble Bobble must be one of the hardest games for any retro update developer to mess up. It's so incredibly simple, so perfectly sublime, you'd have to be a special kind of stupid to get it completely, hopelessly, sickeningly wrong.

But they've done it. *Bubble Bobble Revolution* doesn't so much update the timeless coin-op classic as defile it. This is like painting a moustache on the Mona Lisa or running the complete works of Shakespeare through a spellchecker, and it makes us feel slightly ill.

That we couldn't be placated by the inclusion of the original version on the cartridge should give you some idea of how offensive the new remix really is. We love *Bubble Bobble*, and we're deeply upset that somebody has dragged it into an alleyway and kicked its head in.

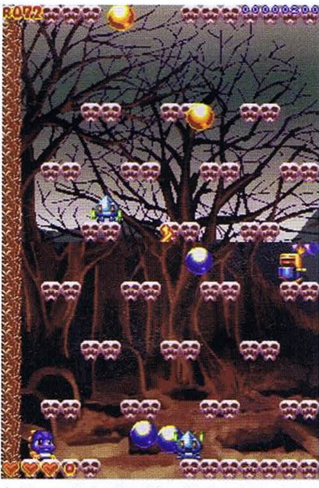
It's supposed to be a platform game in which you blow bubbles to trap enemies, then burst them with your little dinosaur's spines to turn them into tasty, swiftly vanishing fruit. That element is still at the core of *BBR*, but instead of containing the action on a single screen, as is necessary to keep track of all those enemies and items, it's spread over both halves of the DS. Wide portions of the playing area are hidden off the sides of the screens, which means you'll constantly blunder into enemies or fall off platforms.

When you trap an enemy, it floats away in a bubble that can drift absolutely anywhere, and by the time you track it down, the slippery little bugger will have escaped.

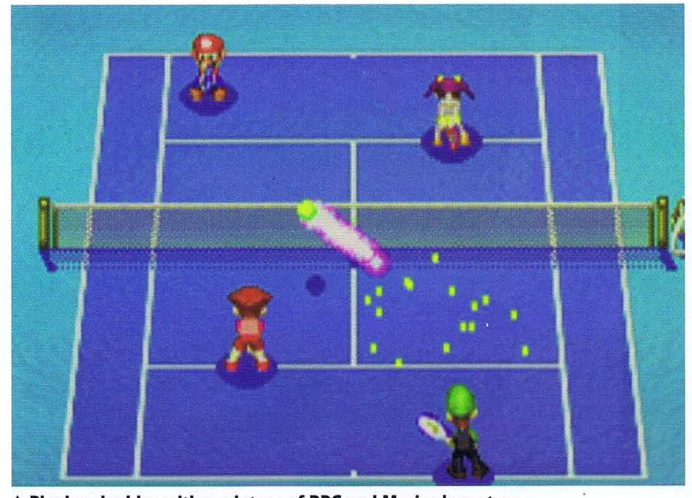
The whole thing is rendered unplayable by shaky controls that mean you can't turn around without taking a step in the opposite direction, and hilariously dumb AI. In some levels, you can sit still on a platform and the enemies will never find you – they'll be stuck somewhere off the side of the screen, and the game will appear deaded. Which it ought to be.

MARTIN KITTS

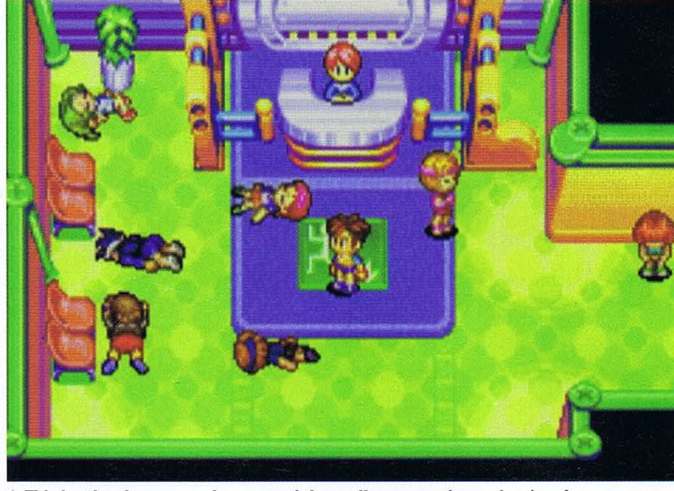
DUAL ★★★★★
TOUCH ★★★★★
1



△ Most of the level is off the side of the screen! This was a really bad idea.



△ Playing doubles with a mixture of RPG and Mario characters.



△ This is what happens when some joker calls our service action 'gay'.

MARIO TENNIS POWER TOUR



FROM: NINTENDO **PLAYERS:** 1-4 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **SAVE:** ON CART **OUT:** NOW (JAP) **COST:** ¥3,800 (£19)

A smashing new business venture for the funny little foreigner and his mouse-white gloves…

Normally you'd expect a Game Boy version of a 'proper' title to be a shorter, comparitively basic copy of the game that spawned it. After all, there's less money to be made in the handheld market and the hardware can't really cut it when compared to the power of full-size consoles. The Game Boy version is all too often treated as an afterthrought.

However, the Mario sports titles always stand out from the cheap and cheerful crowd thanks to the addition of an RPG mode. Pretty much the same RPG, recycled year after year in a *Pokémon* manner, but an RPG nonetheless.

Once again, you play a wannabe tennis star who wins a scholarship to the prestigious Mario Tennis Academy. Your task is to learn the ropes from the many seasoned professionals and shifty rivals who hang out on street corners dispensing useful tips and petty insults.

If, however, you were expecting to feel a pair of sinister white gloves clasped firmly around your wrists while 'tache-muffled words of encouragement are muttered into your ear like really *weird* sweet nothings, think again.

Our pipe-cleaning hero is simply a figurehead for this centre of sporting excellence. It might say Mario on the prospectus, but once you've paid your tuition fees and signed the release forms, the closest you'll get to the great man is standing next to one of his pigeon-spattered statues in the academy grounds. After this most bitter of first-day disappointments has been grudgingly accepted, it's time to move on to the serious business of training, more training and getting beaten.

In the beginning, your character is so weak, he isn't permitted to disgrace himself against a human opponent on the training court. Instead, he must follow a painfully tough regime of tennis-improving exercises that will hopefully turn him into a player worthy of carrying Mario's kitbag. While scientists look on, twiddling knobs, your feeble novice will be playing so much one-man tennis against a wall, he'll be able to do it in his sleep.

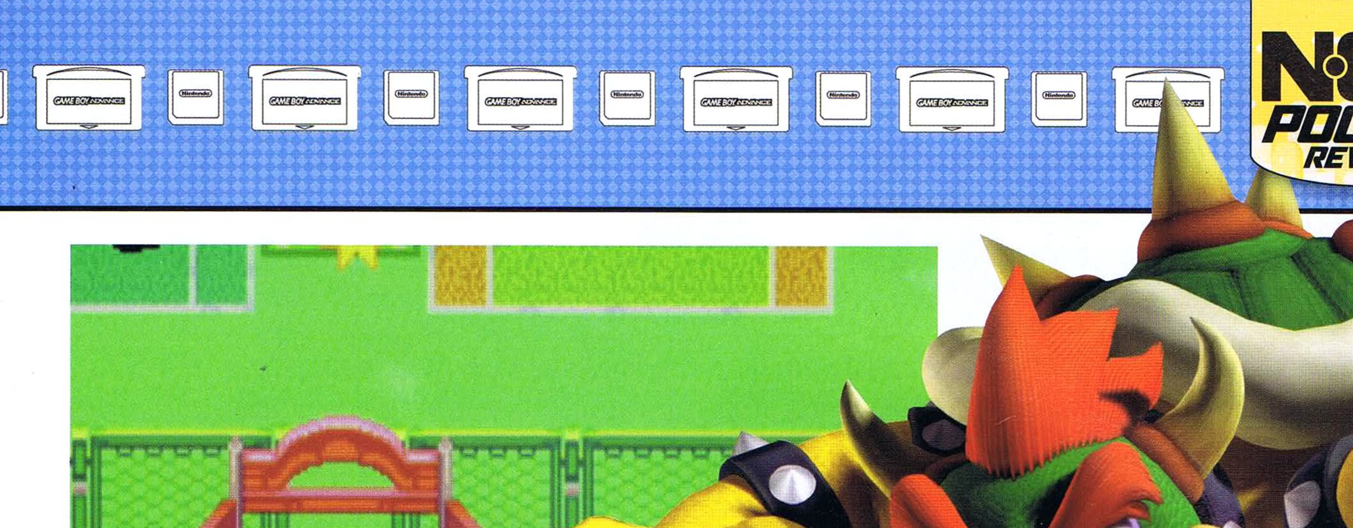
At least, that's the idea. It takes ages to get your character up to tournament standard, plus you've got to share your experience points with your non-training doubles partner. Twice the effort, half the reward.

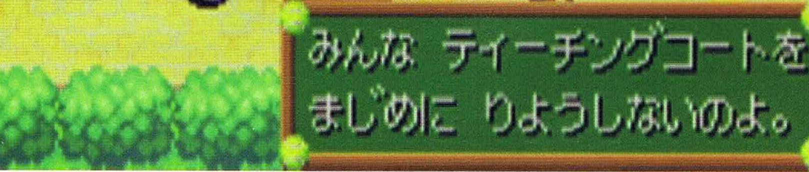
> **"YOUR CHARACTER IS SO WEAK, HE ISN'T ALLOWED TO DISGRACE HIMSELF AGAINST A HUMAN…"**

As RPGs go, *Mario Tennis Power Tour* has a very narrow scope. You don't get to travel the world like the real players do – in fact, you'll never set foot outside of the limited area of the academy. There are no real sub-plots, tennis-related or otherwise, and you'll never be called upon to save the Mushroom Kingdom using your hard-earned backhand slice.

But, there's still something quite special about it. Like *Harvest Moon*, there's joy in repetition.

As you tackle increasingly tricky training routines, and every aspect of

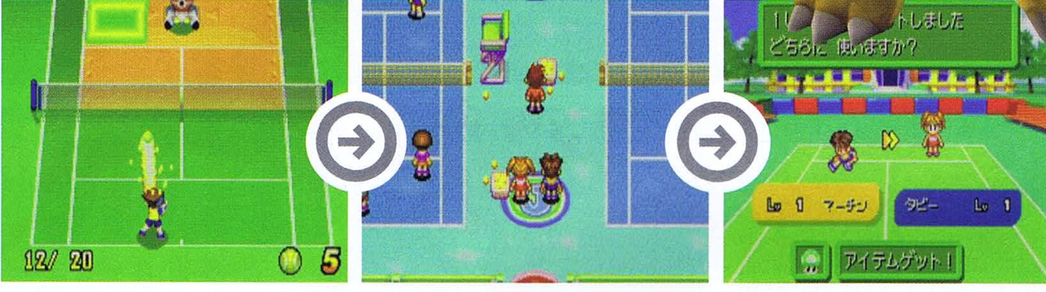




△ **You'll have to be up to speed with your Japanese to get the most from the RPG mode. It's perfectly playable, and you can finish it without really knowing what's going on, but it's very heavy on the text.**

POWER UP AND PLAY

To get anywhere in the RPG Story mode, you have to complete loads of training exercises and defeat rivals in mini challenges on the court. Every success adds a few points to your experience meter, which you can later use to boost both your characters' rankings.



the game's tactical subtlety is spelled out in terms so simple, it becomes a matter of instinct, and you'll find yourself becoming ever more attached to *Mario Tennis*.

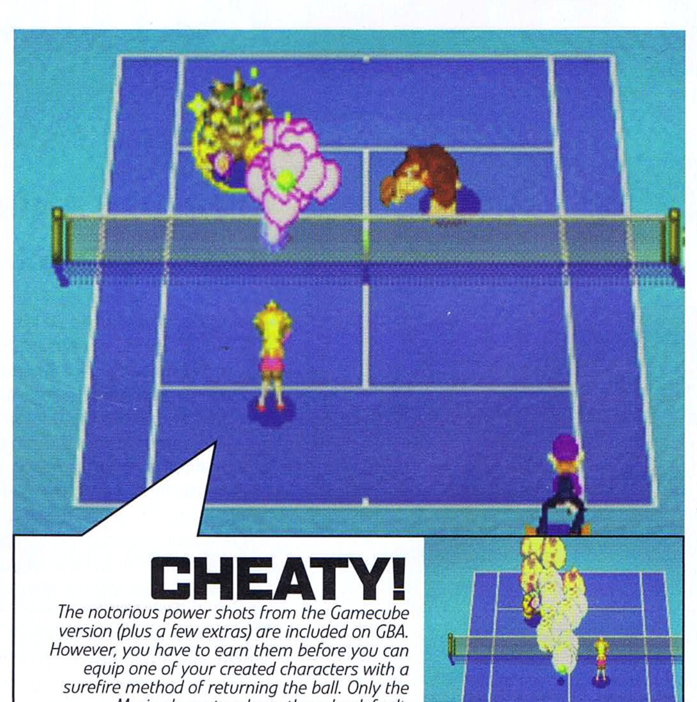
At its heart is the excellent Gamecube version, and little has been lost in the transition to the small screen. The two-button control method, the floaty physics, the speedy rallies and improbable angles… everything that made its big brother such a compelling sports title is present and correct.

You can even forget about the RPG and play one-off games with the usual Mario characters, in which case it's incredibly similar to the Gamecube edition. However, playing with fully powered-up characters will make the early matches in the RPG seem a little tame, so it's probably best avoided until you've won the right to compete at that sort of level.

We've been playing the Japanese version, which is great, despite (or possibly even because of) large portions of the story being a mystery to us. The UK version, out on November 18th, will be reviewed here next month.

MARTIN KITTS

4



CHEATY!

The notorious power shots from the Gamecube version (plus a few extras) are included on GBA. However, you have to earn them before you can equip one of your created characters with a surefire method of returning the ball. Only the Mario characters have them by default.



△ **Practise on all the various types of court. Smashing.**



△ **There's a statue of Mario above the academy doorway.**



△ **Read all about the legends of the tennis court or something.**

△ The green flame weapon homes in on a boss's weak spot.

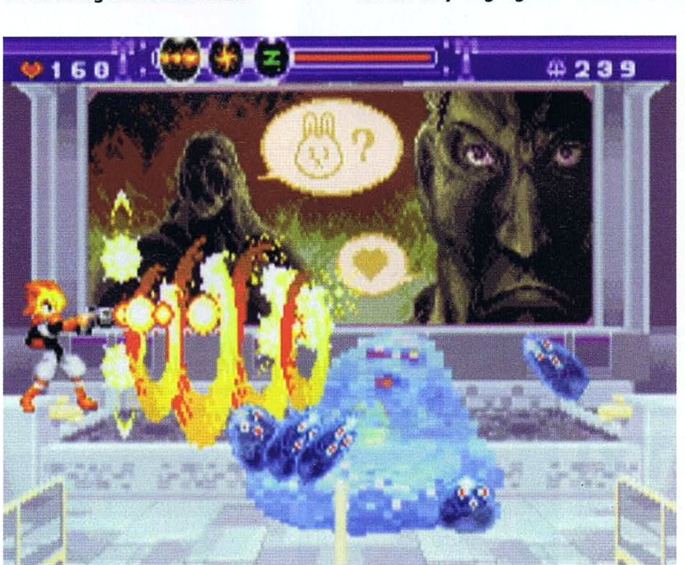
CUSTOM
Flip between three weapons and four control styles. We tended to go for one of the autofire variants, as it means you can charge up a power shot with the R button.


△ Dodge the karate gopher until a van comes along and flattens him.


△ When he's on the floor, burn him. It's the only language he understands.

GUNSTAR FUTURE HEROES


FROM: SEGA/TREASURE **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO
SAVE: ON CART **OUT:** NOV 4 **COST:** £25


△ Like most of the boss characters, this stretchy blue blob appeared in the Mega Drive original. The graphics on the GBA update are considerably better.

Treasure's blast from the past is totally boss...

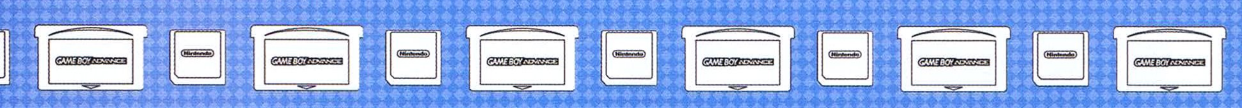

Nobody does 2D like Treasure, revered developer of *Radiant Silvergun*, *Ikaruga* and the marvellous *Astro Boy*, and few Treasure games attract the same kind of worship that *Gunstar Heroes* does.

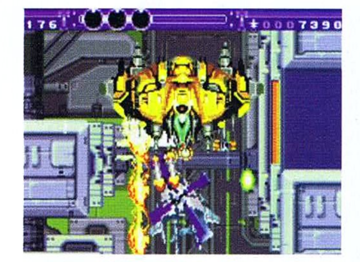
Because Treasure's titles tend to be single-format originals, missing them the first time around usually means a long and expensive search of your friendly, neighbourhood retro stores. But here's a sequel-cum-update to their glorious Mega Drive debut, and ample proof that releasing the Micro was the right thing to do – on this evidence, there's still plenty of life in the old Game Boy.

Granted, not every company can afford to spend three years perfecting a handheld title, as Treasure did with *Gunstar Future Heroes*, but from a gamer's point of view, the effort has really paid off.

Gunstar is ostensibly a scrolling platformer/shooter along the lines of *Metal Slug*, but you just have to scratch the surface to see there's far more to it than mere running and gunning. It's so technically impressive, so furiously busy, such beautifully crafted fun, that it can be overwhelming at times.

Fantastic ideas, that could have formed the basis of countless lesser games, are explored for a single, brief level before being discarded in favour of something even more spectacular. There's a bit where you're standing on top of an aircraft, flying towards the camera as you shoot at pursuing missiles and spin the screen to avoid









△ Part of the mighty Seven Force.



△ This is probably the biggest boss we've seen on a GBA. It tries to crush you with your own spaceship.



△ It's like a masterclass in boss design.



△ If you like explosions, you'll love this game.

bullets. It's like the armada scene from Treasure's own *Sin & Punishment* crossed with Sega's *Afterburner* in reverse, and you'll only see it for a couple of minutes in the entire game.

Trying to pick one true standout moment is simply an impossible task, because every time *Gunstar* seems to have set itself an unattainably high standard, another hyperactive showpiece or amusing nod to the 16-bit past will make a play for your attention.

"IT'S SO FURIOUSLY BUSY AND BEAUTIFULLY CRAFTED, IT CAN BE OVERWHELMING"

The level where you rescue little yellow birds from a snake-filled, rotating maze is bizarre and memorable, but is surpassed by the reappearance of the food-based Mega Drive character Curry & Rice, here reimagined as a towering, cuddly gopher. You fight him in an alleyway, luring him out from behind the rubbish bins and under the wheels of a speeding van.

One level is a board game where every space conceals a boss or two – you can skip past some of them at the expense of a potential high score, but fail at any point and you'll be dumped a few squares back. You'll play a helicopter shoot-'em-up that uses a nifty control method to combine a vertically scrolling playing area and 360° attack patterns. And then there's Seven Force, a transforming mecha-beast who is arguably the greatest end-of-level guardian ever devised.

Gunstar Future Heroes is in a class of its own. Buy it, love it, and thank Treasure that somebody still knows how to make old-school seem like the freshest thing on earth.

MARTIN KITTS

5



This is the game's hubworld, in its isometric glory.

The boss is really quite impressive. Thanks Rare!

Both characters can carry barrels.

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY 3

FROM: NINTENDO **PLAYERS:** 1-2 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **SAVE:** ON CART **OUT:** NOV 4 **COST:** £30

Dixie and Kiddy Kong return on GBA. At least Diddy isn't anywhere to be seen.

Surely the Kong family must have enough countries for a whole Kongtinent by now? Sorry. Moving on… This is the third and final game in the series that first appeared on the SNES, and has been lovingly reproduced on the GBA with a few new bits.

Playing as both Dixie and Kiddy Kong (swapping between them as you like), you'll get involved in some some harsh but slick platforming as you time jumps and dodge enemies in a manner that you're probably all too accustomed to on the GBA. Remember, though, that *Donkey Kong Country 3* is one of those games that created clichés in the first place, providing some great, if generic, platforming action at a time when side-scrolling 2D jump 'em ups were all the rage.

Unlike *Donkey Kong Countries 1&2*, this game takes place in a hub world that the player needs to explore. The levels are more varied than in the previous games, with themes and backgrounds changing between stages instead of between worlds. A wealth of mini-games make for a welcome diversion too, including a journey through a 3D tunnel that works nicely.

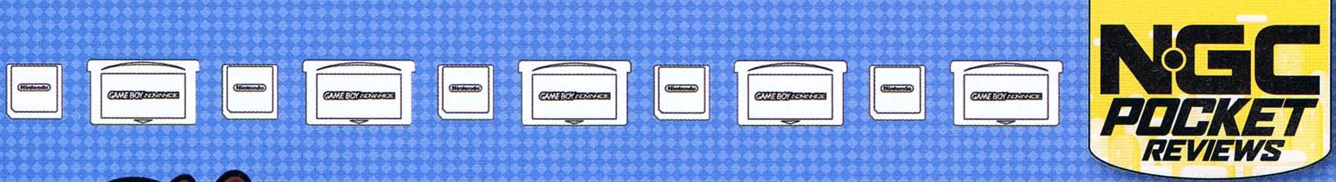
As is traditional, there are lots of collectible trinkets for replay-value junkies to hoover up, including umpteen different types of bonus coin. And finding every last one of the goodies is a task that'll likely last you longer than most pets. Oh, and the music's amazing.

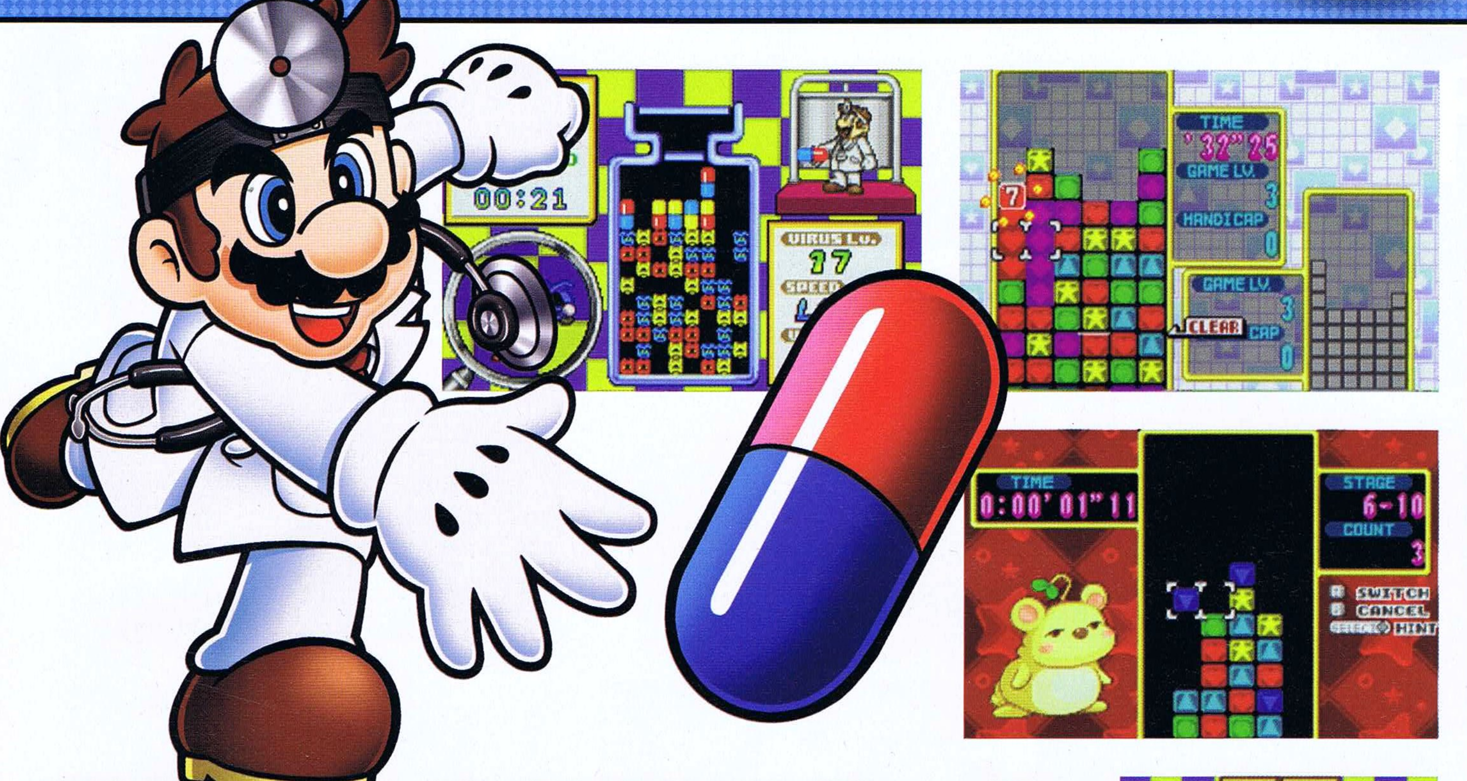
> "DKC3 IS ONE OF THOSE GAMES THAT CREATED CLICHÉS IN THE FIRST PLACE"

This is quite a tricky game too, so anyone who was reared on the difficulty curves of 3D platforming outings which starred certain other, lesser, fur-covered heroes (Ty? Kao? We're looking at you) won't find any comfort here. This is old-school pressure that doesn't care if you've run out of lives or got snagged on a thorny puzzle. But it has aged relatively well: it's a fast, playable and generous platforming package, albeit one that we can't help but feel we've stomped through many a time before.

STEVEN BAILEY

3





DR MARIO & PUZZLE LEAGUE



FROM: NINTENDO **PLAYERS:** 1-2 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **SAVE:** ON CART **OUT:** NOW **COST:** £25

If an apple a day keeps the doctor away, what do we have to eat do get rid of Dr Mario?



Wearing its "Happy! Mario 20th" badge with pride, this cart sees Nintendo get its *Super Mario Bros* birthday celebrations into full swing – by releasing fundamentally unenhanced versions of two games that have both appeared on Game Boy twice before. Hip, hip… (cue uncomfortable silence).

Still, we're quite happy for Nintendo to keep rehashing *Puzzle League* (aka *Tetris Attack*, aka *Panel de Pon*) until someone notices. Far simpler than *Tetris* – you just shift tiles to match three or more of the same colour – it remains the only serious rival for The Russian Game's puzzling crown. Get into your stride, and the bricks blur like a Rubik's Cube in the hands of a world champ. Only the daytime soap-style music keeps you calm as you try to satisfy your craving for more, more, *more*.

Puzzle League is the most mode-bloated game of this 'collection', being home to a cruelly clever bundle of puzzles (level six is, no arguments, impossible) and a Vs mode against the Game Boy's brain. The latter is challenging stuff: just watch as your opponent casually shuffles a few tiles here and there, then sits back with a smug silicon smile as the combo chain hits double figures. But it's no substitute for a one-player adventure against increasingly fiendish CPU-controlled evil, a feature from both SNES *Tetris Attack* and N64 *Pokémon Puzzle League* that's now been inexplicably dumped.

As for *Dr Mario*… meh. Tedious match-pills-to-viruses rubbish that's outlived its welcome by around a decade. This version only improves on the *NES Classics* rerelease with a half-hearted graphical sheen and a best-of-three multiplayer. We've had more fun with the digital display on our washing machine.

And that really is about it. One great game, one grating game, and all rounded off with two stupid oversights: no single cart link, and no proper high-score table. Puzzling, you say? Incomprehensible, more like…

MARK GREEN

3

> **"WATCH AS YOUR OPPONENT PLAYS AND THEN SITS BACK WITH A SMUG SILICON SMILE"**



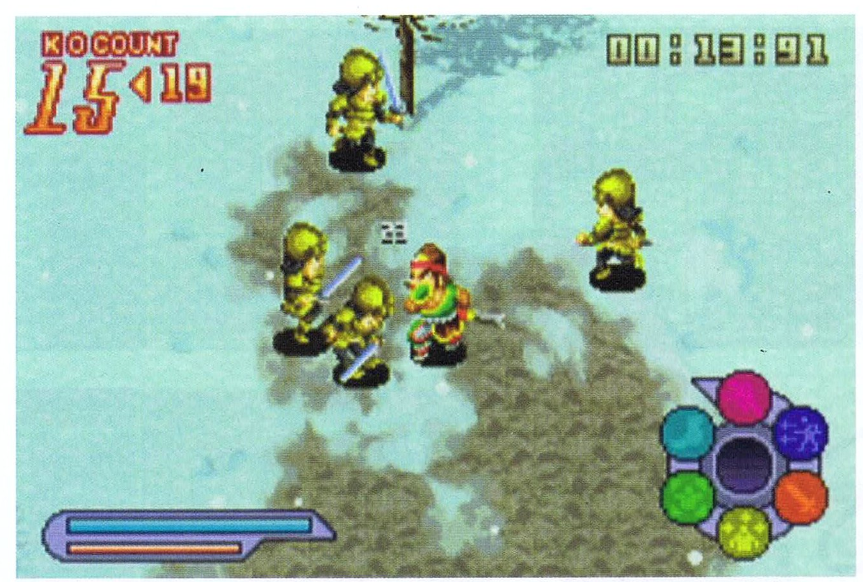
△ Dr Mario should have his licence to practise medicine revoked. Now.



△ Flip *Puzzle League* on its side for bigger tiles. Good for GB Micro play.

△ High scores for *Puzzle League* – no names allowed. Hear our teeth gnash.

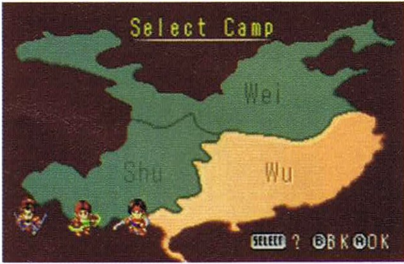




△ The more powerful your moves in Battle Phase are, the more damage points your enemies lose.







△ Choose which area of Ancient China you want proceedings to kick off in.



△ This screen gives an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of each character.





△ Smash open boxes to earn weapons and more points.



△ The encyclopaedia tells you all about each character's background.



△ The ability screen shows everything you need to know in depth.

DYNASTY WARRIORS



FROM: KOEI **PLAYERS:** 1 **SINGLE CART LINK:** NO **SAVE:** ON CART **OUT:** DEC 2 **COST:** £30

Like China in your hand, as T'Pau once hollered…



Like the union between Peter Andre and Jordan, *Dynasty Warriors*'s pairing of top-down turn-based strategy and hack-and-slash sword battling is an unusual marriage. It just about works, but plotting out tactical moves for your units – which never contain more than one warrior – and then suddenly launching into an all out one-man Zorroesque swordfight, feels more than a little jarring.

On the big consoles, *Dynasty Warriors* is a full-on 3D ruck, in which the astonishing numbers of enemy soldiers, huge free-roaming maps and spectacular-looking special attacks go some way to disguising the flaws of the gameplay – in particular, that it all becomes too tedious, too soon. Of course, these things can't be done on the GBA – hence the radical overhaul in the way that the game works.

Koei can be reasonably satisfied with their achievement. Set in ancient China (as ever), your ultimate goal is to control the game world and wipe out the other dynasties. You have to see where enemy units lie, check their strength in comparison to yours and then, if you think you can win, rock up and shift into Battle Phase.

> **"BATTLE PHASE DESCENDS INTO RANDOM SLASHERY, THOUGH THERE'S SOME SPECIAL MOVES"**

Battle Phase tends to descend into random slashery, although there are numerous special moves you can employ. Most important is the Musou attack, which can be employed after offing enough enemies, giving hugely powerful attacks and temporary invulnerability. Battling is fun, but limited. Then, depending on how well you've done in battle, you might be awarded with movement points, new weapons or an increase in combat or defence stats to take back to the Movement Phase.

While undoubtedly fun for a while – and rammed with historical detail – there's no doubt that *Dynasty Warriors* soon runs out of steam and becomes a bit tedious. If you're mad about the *Dynasty Warriors* series on other consoles, you'll probably enjoy this. If not, you should look elsewhere. Probably in the vague direction of *Advance Wars*.

DAVID COOK

3



PICTO ANIMATIONS

It's like giving crayons to your psyche.

There aren't any animations this month, really, more a flick-book and a wall chart. They're nice and all, but can we make a request? If someone would like to animate the first ever instalment of epic medieval action romp The Adventures of Kittsy, we'd gladly print it here, and would invite several C-list celebs* along to attend its premiere with the option to then turn it into a mini-series. Otherwise, keep sending your lovely Pictochat sketches and animations in. People – take up your styluses and break free from the shackles of having to draw on paper in a permanent fashion. *(they wouldn't come though)

NINTENCATS

Do you ever wish you could take a glance at your cat's face and be able to gauge its emotional state? If so, fret no more, thanks to DJ Fryer of Wiltshire, whose handy chart will let you decipher the exact emotional whereabouts of your puss, any time, anywhere. Is your feline feeling fine or about to scratch your eyelids off for a laugh (we appreciate it's hard to tell the difference)? If any dog lovers out there are enraged by the presence of such filthy animals, then please do send in your sketches of dogs looking lovely or headbutting cats or whatever.

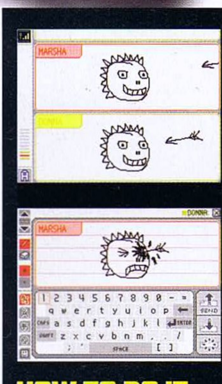


METROID PRIME RIB

Daniel Stuart has decided to blur the boundaries of animation by sending us his Metroid opus in the form of snapshots, leaving it to our imaginations to put them in motion. Viewed individually, they're an eerie depiction of the bleak tension that crackles throughout a Metroid/Samus standoff. As well as many close-up facials (quiet, you) of Samus and her gunslinger eyes, it's a tale whose climax looks like either an exploding Metroid or the dark heart of the universe unfolding before our very eyes. Decide for yourselves! It also kind of looks like a space guff.







HOW TO DO IT...

1. Draw a little picture of something and then click on Send.
2. Now copy that picture back into your drawing board and make a little change to it before sending it again.
3. Now copy that picture onto your drawing board again, and edit it for the third frame in the animation. Keep sending and copying your picture back and forth, making all your little changes along the way.
4. The amount of space you have left in the message log is shown by the meter to the left-hand side. Keep an eye on it.
5. Once you've finished the final frame of your animation, press the up arrow to flick back through the message log until you reach the top.
6. Now hold down the left shoulder button and then, half a second later, hold down the right shoulder button.

NGC POCKET NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

We want your Pictochat artwork

Pictochat is a wonderful tool. Made to be used, but born to be abused. If you've created an animation or piece of artwork that you feel the world has to see, then send it in, but be sure to check out the following instructions. As you can't save your pictures on the DS, this is what we'd like you to do. When you've finished with your Pictoart, turn the lights off, take a photo with a digital camera and send it as an email (titled Pictoart) to **ngc@futurenet.co.uk**. If you haven't got access to a digital camera, just send a normal photograph to:
Pictoart, **NGC** Magazine 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW.

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REVIEWS

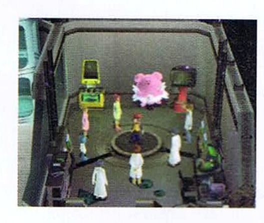


BATTALION WARS

How do you convert a complex turn-based war game into an addictive third-person shooter without losing the strategy? Here's how. P50

POKÉMON XD GALE OF DARKNESS

Steal cars and murder prostitutes in a… oh, wait. It's just Pokémon. P56







PLUS!

MARIO SMASH FOOTBALL

From Battalion Wars to Italian scores as Mario's All Stars hit the turf. P58

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

Is it really the ultimate? Hmm? Really? Hmm? Find out here, now. P60

THE SIMS 2

Grow people, and CRUSH them. Or love them. P62

MARIO SUPERSTAR BASEBALL

Time for a home run, as we review the UK version of this quality title. P64

AND MORE…

Dancing Stage: Mario Mix. LEGO Star Wars, X-Men Legends II. Go here: P65

OUR SCORING SYSTEM

0-24 Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured this game is absolute crud.

25-49 A disappointing title, stashed with nasty faults and likely to be short on any quality.

50-74 Some great bits, some not-so great bits. Decent but definitely problems.

75-89 Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.

90+ Rarely awarded, a 90+ is essential. Buy with confidence.

NGC STAR GAME

MEET THE NGC TEAM

Should war break out today, what's the first weapon you can find?



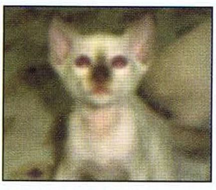
TOM E
Being a cosplay enthusiast, Tom had plenty of crap, fake blades to wield. Does he live by the sword? "Yes! It's a really nice pub."



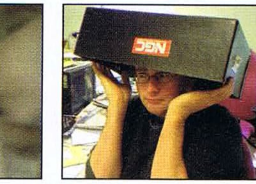
MARTIN
Kittsy roared his battlecry: "Pokémon? PokéC'MON, more like." Then Psyduck fell off his finger and hurt his foot and everyone died.



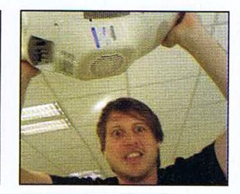
PAUL
True to form, Paul grabbed any old fruit he could get his hands on. "Back off, war," he snarled, "Or I'll do the four-skin joke."



GERAINT
"I'll transform into a kitten and scour the warzone for food scraps while looking adorable," said Geraint, with his fingers crossed.



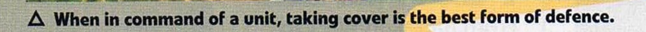
STEVE
Being a communist, Steve stuck his head in a box, hoping that any war could be averted by hearty songs and robust trade routes.



GREENER
A keen survivalist, Greener keeps a small fridge stored above his head at all times for "stashing snacks and killing heads. TIMBER!"

"Convenient and considerate"





△ When in command of a unit, taking cover is the best form of defence.



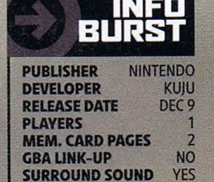
△ Units can only swim for short periods.



△ You won't last long without backup.

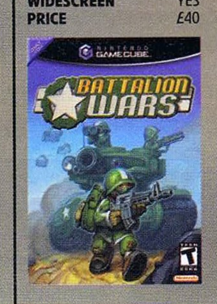
NGC STAR GAME

BATTALION WARS



INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	KUJU
RELEASE DATE	DEC 9
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
PRICE	£40

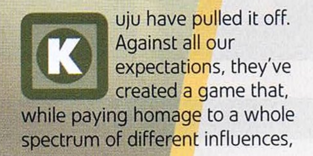






△ Tanks are great for busting through enemy lines to tackle a specific target quickly.

We never thought we'd ever actually say this, but…



Kuju have pulled it off. Against all our expectations, they've created a game that, while paying homage to a whole spectrum of different influences, nods sagely in the direction of *Advance Wars* and delivers something refreshingly new and unique.

It starts out feeling very much like an action game. The opening level gives you command of a solitary rifleman, and you learn the basics of movement and aiming. You can run, jump, lock on to nearby threats, roll left and right to avoid incoming fire and shoot using the A button. As you progress, more riflemen, vehicles and infantry units get added to your army which, you'll discover, you can command individually or as a group using flicks of the C-stick. Tapping the X button toggles the simple 'stay or follow' command, while Y tells your team to attack whichever target you're currently

"YOU'RE SOON WELL VERSED IN THE ART OF WAR, EQUIPPED TO TAKE ON HARSHER TRIALS"



Δ This high-speed escape level gives you a great chance to get to grips with the light and bouncy recon vehicle.





Δ Hmm. Room for improvement there.

LIFE'S A BEACH AND THEN YOU FLY

Each and every mission throws a number of very different challenges at you…



You have to fight your way from the beach to the top using mortar units to flush out entrenched enemies. Speed and aggression are key as you're pounded by artillery.



Going through the first defences, set your tanks on the artillery units, your mortar vets on the two machine gun turrets and your riflemen on the rocket infantry.



You're now free to capture the beach head base – there is another to the east – and they've got your missile vets held captive. Use your tank and mortar units to free them.



Gunships, tanks and infantry all take you to task here, and you need to free pilots from the base to get your fighters out. Try sneaking in with a single foot soldier.



Now it's time to take to the skies and battle the gunships and massive flying fortresses known as Strato Destroyers – if you can take them out, victory will be yours.

locked on to. The control system is very, *very* simple and wonderfully intuitive, and is the first of Kuju's many triumphs with *Battalion Wars*.

It's a very convenient and considerate game. Anything that you want to do, any order you wish to execute, is rarely more than a couple of button presses away. It's never unwieldy, it never confuses and you always feel in control. Sure, things take some getting used to in the beginning, but because Kuju introduce you to concepts and strategies very slowly (such as which units to use in any given situation), you never feel overwhelmed and are able to take it all in your stride. The learning curve is perfectly pitched, adding in layers of strategy piece by piece.



MICRO MANAGE

The control system is deceptively easy to use – there's actually a great deal you can do with it. For example, you can pick out individual units and send them to guard waypoints or hide units behind cover to increase their defence. Finding the style of play that suits you is very rewarding.

Each and every level offers something new to get to grips with – a new kind of vehicle perhaps, or a new combination of adversaries to attack – and as soon as you're introduced to a new problem, you're instantly given a simple example to practise on. Before you know it, you're well versed in the art of war, and fully equipped to take on the game's harsher trials.

And it's not easy. As we said, each mission is very different to the last, requiring different approaches and new strategies to overcome them. From the game's main map screen, you can access various continents, each with a handful of missions to attempt in the correct order. The main objectives are themselves



Δ Definitely not the sort of game you can play using bongos.

"It's tempting to spray bullets like a madman"



Sentry mode will make your men guard a position.



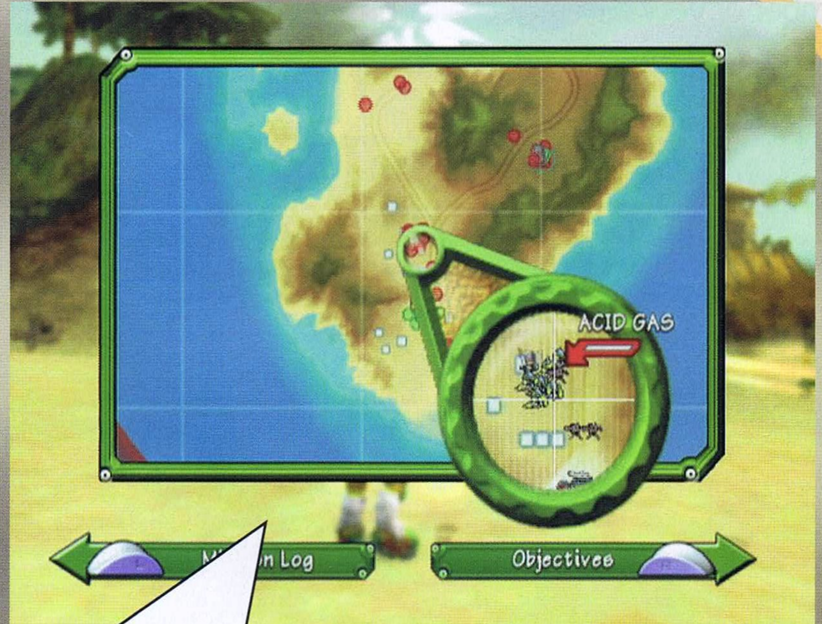
Riflemen are your long-range workhorses.



Make sure you match the right unit to the right enemy.



The gunship is not only powerful, but also lets you get a much better view of what's going on. These are great to command from.



RECON

Being fully prepared for the trials ahead is of the utmost importance if you want to win. Pausing the game brings up a map that shows you the entire battlefield and what units you're up against. This is of great help for most of the missions and, although you could argue that it makes things a little easy, we feel the game could be unnecessarily frustrating without it. Forcing you to memorise the exact layout and enemy positions just wouldn't be as much fun.





It's often better to command your troops from a single unit.

quite diverse, from simple locate-and-destroy missions to holding a fort, bombing runs and raiding enemy strongholds – all of which take place on a substantial expanse of battlefield. From your starting position you have a primary objective and, often, a couple of secondary objectives to complete. These aren't *always* necessary but, in most cases, completing them proves to be very helpful. For example, freeing extra troops from a compound means you can call on them later in the game to deal with specific threats, such as airborne enemies.

Initially, it's tempting to adopt a more active, hands-on role on the battlefield, spraying bullets and



ACTION MEN

Your AI-controlled units are pretty smart. If there are any medi-packs around, they'll go ahead and heal themselves without you having to tell them to. However, they won't attack as quickly if you don't order them, giving you the incentive to concentrate and really direct the men under your command.



△ Even though your men won't last long if overwhelmed, taking control yourself gives you the opportunity to pull vital units out of danger.





△ Fighters are great against enemy Gunships.



△ The recon vehicles are invaluable for scouting the way ahead before the rest follow.

circle strafing like a mad man, but as *Wars* progresses and the difficulty increases, you begin to realise the necessity of careful consideration in your skirmish-planning. Just as in its GBA turn-based cousins, certain units will either work well or else be utterly useless against particular enemies. The key to victory, then, comes from pitching the correct unit types against each other. The difference here is that you have to do it on the fly: you have to quickly ascertain which to send for in the charge, which to hold back, or, if you're feeling confident, whether to send the whole lot in and micro manage their movements and targets in the thick of the battle.

"SEEING YOUR TACTICS UNFOLD THROUGH THE SMOKE AND GUNFIRE IS REWARDING"

It's actually quite difficult at times. We found ourselves retrying, restarting (and downright *failing*) certain missions over and over, trying different approaches, strategies and combinations of units. However, and this is the crucial thing, thanks to the simple control scheme, this is rarely frustrating. Watching your tactics unfold through the smoke and gunfire of a chaotic battle is immensely rewarding, as is thinking you've got the job done only to see more units come streaming over the brow of a hill, and then somehow *still* manage to scrape through by the skin of your teeth. It can be exhilarating, and also rather satisfying.

It's testament to Kuju's craft that they've succeeded on so many levels. Managing to pull off an action game with intense levels of excitement and, simultaneously, making a strategy game with this amount of depth, must have been quite the balancing act, but the



REPLAY

With only around 20 levels, the game's not particularly huge, but there's still plenty of scope for replay. Every level grades you on speed, technique and power and gives you an overall rank just like in Advance Wars. There are also extra bonus missions to unlock when you reach each mission's score targets.



THIS AND THAT...

There seem to be many influences at work in Battalion Wars, and some are more obvious than others...



■ **The lock-on function is reminiscent of *Metroid*, particularly as it frees up the C-stick for intuitive selection duties.**



■ **It's almost like a military *Pikmin* at times, as swarms of little infantry men scurry around doing your bidding.**



■ **Some of the ways that the weapons work (like powering up bazooka blasts) feel very *Worms*-like.**



■ ***Army Men*! But this is different. Every *Army Men* game we've played has been awful – this is actually very good.**

BATTALION WARS

We love the smell of action strategy in the morning











△ Bombers can be absolutely devastating. These are great for taking out multiple tanks in one go.





△ Flame Vets are deadly to footsoldiers.



△ It's better to man AA units yourself.

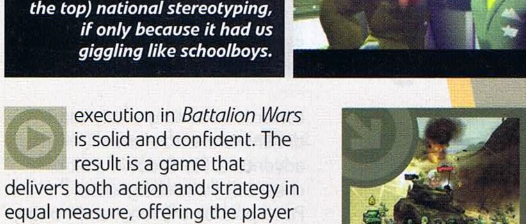




△ You can man any machine gun turrets or nests you come across – especially useful for chewing up infantry.

RED ARMY

Cutscenes the way we like 'em: short, to the point and serving a genuine purpose. We particularly like the relentlessly obvious (and over the top) national stereotyping, if only because it had us giggling like schoolboys.



execution in *Battalion Wars* is solid and confident. The result is a game that delivers both action and strategy in equal measure, offering the player a great deal of choice. We'd wager that everyone will play the game in very different ways, with missions played out through different tactics from person to person, which – in our opinion – is the hallmark of something truly special.

We'll admit we were the first to cover our eyes in disgust when we saw that Kuju were taking this direction but, in all honesty, *Battalion Wars* is very much in keeping with the spirit of handheld games, despite forging a completely new path. The presentation for example, is absolutely spot-on, from the stylised, almost toy-like tanks, to the unit icons and the kind of banter that goes back and forth between the COs. It retains that sense of fun, that whimsical humour and cheekiness which takes the edge off what is still a very serious and accomplished strategy game. Everything from the extensive (and actually very good) voice work to the marvellous battlefields and detailed terrain exudes quality. The acute differences in the handling of all the different vehicles suggests a great deal of time spent balancing them, getting them just right. Variations in maps, objectives and challenges also give away just how much effort has gone into the design of each and every mission. When you're presented with something that's such an accomplished labour of love, it's very difficult not to recommend it, let alone be disappointed by it. This was a very pleasant surprise indeed and, we hope, the first of many in the future.

GERAINT EVANS

STAY ON TARGET

The only major criticism we can level at Battalion Wars is that we occasionally found it tricky to pinpoint specific units accurately in the heat of battle, which sometimes led us to lose the odd tank or two. But, considering that such cases are in the minority, it really isn't much of a problem…

> **"TINY VARIATIONS GIVE AWAY HOW MUCH EFFORT HAS BEEN PUT INTO THE GAME'S DESIGN"**

+

- Feels very unique.
- Has strategic depth.
- Great control system.

–

- Targeting can be a little stubborn at times.
- We wanted *more*.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

PIKMIN 2
Nintendo
NGC/99 92%
Another great Nintendo strategy game, replacing guns with vegetable men.

8 VISUALS
Not super-detailed but slick with lovely, toy-like aesthetic.

8 SOUNDS
Loads of voice work, cheeky themes and robust sound effects.

8 MASTERY
Super smooth, beautifully designed with solid controls.

8 LIFESPAN
Around 20 levels, but plenty of scope for replay.

VERDICT

Brilliant fun. An absolute blast from start to finish and, without question, the best action strategy game available.





NGC 90

"No ticked-off Pikachu going for your kneecaps"

△ All your least favourite Pokémon moves – including Attract – are present and correct.



△ Look familiar? That's right – it's Pyrite Town, lifted brick-for-brick from *Colosseum*. Bad Nintendo.



△ The glittering battle effects look much better in motion. As do Machamp's impressive pecs.



POKÉMON XD GALE OF DARKNESS

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	GENIUS SONORITY
RELEASE DATE	NOV 18
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	43
GBA LINK-UP	YES
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40



Pokémon go wild. Sort of.

So it's basically *Pokémon Colosseum Plus*. Which means no GB-style scrabbling about in tall grass, hoping for a ticked-off Pikachu to emerge and go for your kneecap. *Pokémon XD* towards becoming a fully three-dimensional catch-'em-all adventure. Plonk down a bit of cheese at three designated Pokéspots on the map, and hungry 'wild' Pokémon will tuck in, all ready for the battling, the catching,

> "IT'S A THRILL DISCOVERING A TRAINER WITH CATCHABLE POKÉMON IN HIS TROUSERS"

is about 'snagging': filling your Pokédex with 'mon snatched from other trainers during battle. You won't see the likes of Sandshrew and Surskit running wild here.

Or will you? Only a few hours in, *Pokémon XD* takes a tentative step and the crowbarring into a Pokéball. It's basically a cut-down Safari Zone – a bit fudged, often annoying (you have to trek back to the Pokéspot when the cheese gets nibbled), and with just *nine* monsters rising to the bait. But,

POKÉMON XD

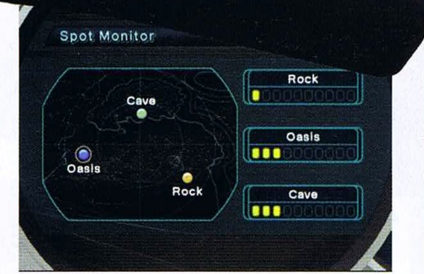
Battling, catching, crowbarring and cheese-nibbling



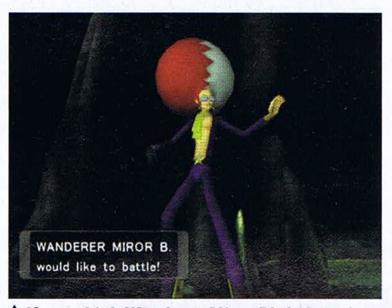
△ There's a bloke here who'll help you purify your Shadow Pokémon. He lives in the tree.



△ That's one of the Cipher forces at the back there. *Viewtiful Joe's* lawyers will be in touch.



△ Pokéspots in action. By the way, we lied about the cheese. It's "Poké Snacks".



△ If you think Wanderer Miror B's haircut is ridiculous, you should see him dance.



△ The Aurora Searcher is this year's accessory of choice for Pokémon Trainers. Its job: to spot the purple glow of shadowy evil that surrounds catchable Shadow Pokémon. And to look silly.

GOOD AS NEW

Snagged Pokémon have few moves and don't evolve. But, stick them in the new Purification Chamber with some non-Shadow 'mon, wait a bit, and the normal monsters will help their antisocial chum "open its heart".





you know, it's a start.

Thing is, though, we quite like it when the Pokémon play hard to get. Because *XD* doesn't throw creatures at you like cuddly confetti, it's a real thrill when you discover a Trainer with a catchable Shadow Pokémon hidden down his trousers. Your little army grows slowly and steadily, giving you time to lavish tender loving care on all your charges – and learn which of them is best used for, say, handing a Wailmer its ass on a plate.

Also, as you might have expected, the battles are beautiful. The amount of character packed into Corphish alone, snapping his cute little claws and waddling about on his six stumpy legs, is enough to make you wish 386 fighty critters (and counting) really did live in a forest near your house. Pokémon still refuse to make contact during their roughing and tumbling, but the animation and effects mean scraps are never less than electrifying. Good thing too: there are lots of them.

As for the rest of *XD*: if Reggie Fils-Aime really thinks this is "a brand new Pokémon game", he can't have played *Colosseum* much. Afroman Miror is back as the boss again. You bike between locations just like before. Beautiful as the lush greenery of Agate Village is, and impressive as Pyrite Town's rusty neo-Western charms may be, the map is largely déja vu territory for *Colosseum* fans. Don't get us wrong, though – it's all *good. XD* has a special atmosphere all its own, and there's a real magic to exploring this strange creature-crammed world – just don't go expecting too many surprises.

The other problem: you can *feel* the game slowing you down, eking out game time with unskippable cutscenes, fixed-speed battles and endless fights against Cipher henchmen (who look like they share DNA with Viewtiful Joe, P.N.03 Woman *and* the Power Rangers).

But, *Gale of Darkness* still blows us away. The strategy and variety inherent in that tried-and-trusted Pokécombat – coupled with it all looking *so* gorgeous – gives us goose pimples all over. Trade back and forth between GC and GBA, watch your *Fire Red, Leaf Green* or *Emerald* monsters up on the big screen, and love every minute.

MARK GREEN



HOUSE!

Battle Bingo isn't a Friday night down the Mecca: it's a complex new mode in XD, played on a four-by-four grid, each square of which has a different battle behind it. It's tough stuff, and the need to keep racking up 'Entry Points' means bunging Pokéballs about like they're peanut M&Ms.



- Free range Pokémon – of a sort.
- Spot two *Diamond/Pearl* creatures.



- Slow pace, and much backtracking.
- Why only 83 Pokémon?



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Golden Sun: The Lost Age
Nintendo
NGC/83 91%
Also a mix of monsters and map-marching.





7 VISUALS

Those cute little gits are looking better than ever.



8 SOUNDS

Good, but it's time those Pokémon cries were sorted.

8 MASTERY

A beautiful and bewitching console RPG of joy.

8 LIFESPAN

Force Pokémon into bloody battle after bloody battle.

VERDICT

Over 20 hours of thrilling role playing adventure, plus endless Pokéwar. We're sold on this one.



NGC 86

Shoot as soon as you see that green flash.

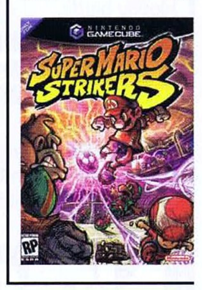
Touch the fence and you'll be electrocuted.

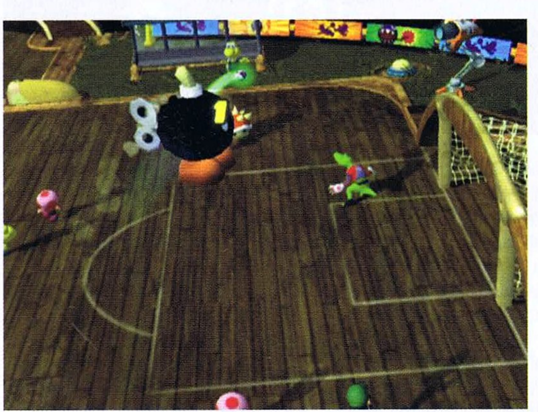
MARIO SMASH FOOTBALL

You should see Donkey Kong play football – he's the new Maradona…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NEXT LEVEL
RELEASE DATE	NOV 18
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	5
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40





A Bob-omb and a shell – it's all going mental.



Birdo skins her marker. Oh dear.



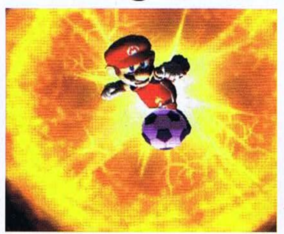
This is so unfair. More unfair than Pedro Mendes' 'goal' for Spurs against Man Utd being ruled out for not crossing the line, more unfair than the referee's decision to send David Beckham off in the World Cup qualifier against Austria, and more unfair than Maradona's hand of god goal against England in the 1986 World Cup quarter final.

Now imagine if, for Maradona's act of blatant cheating, Argentina were awarded two goals instead of one. That's how unfair *Mario Smash Football* is. Yep, you could be seconds away from a 2-1 win that will guarantee the Mushroom Cup, when DK powers up a supershot, whacks the ball with his big gorilla fist and sends the Kremling keeper flying into the back of the net with the ball. The cries of *ref-e-ree*, however, are ignored as DK's team are awarded two goals for a supershot, winning the match and the cup. This comes after you were right through on goal with only the keeper to beat, but were frozen with a blue shell after Bowser invaded the pitch and flamed your ass, and after a Bob-omb crashed into the goalmouth, stunning your keeper and leaving DK free to palm the ball into an empty net. Suddenly a tackle from behind when you're about to shoot seems like nothing to moan about.

This is all part of the fun though, and if you were expecting a serious *Mario* football game, you probably shouldn't own a Gamecube. It's an anything-goes, end-to-end, five-a-side football game and, despite shells flying all over the pitch, it is

WHAT A SHOT
That was worth two goals!


To score a supershot, you have to power up your shot until this bar pops up, then press A when the markers hit the two green lines. It's like a golf game.


Get it wrong and you'll still have to sit through a cutscene, but instead of the ball hitting the net, the keeper sometimes fries your captain with some flames.


Do it right and the ball will scream into the top corner. If you do it perfectly, the Kremling will catch the ball, only to be sent flying into the back of the net.



For that brilliant piece of individual skill you'll be awarded two goals, so a 10-0 victory in a two minute match isn't actually beyond the realms of possibility.



△ At least Maradona attempted to hide his handball. Donkey Kong is so blatant.


△ Stop the special shot meter right on the money and it's a guaranteed goal.


△ Hope the Kremling remembered to bring his gloves. That shot might sting a bit.


△ Just look at that cardboard cut-out crowd – so poor.



△ Someone should have a word with the groundsman.


△ Shell on the pitch!


△ Toad makes it 1-0.

surprisingly decent. Unbelievably for a game where a Chain Chomp bites you on the bum when you're about to score, it can be quite tactical. You can win on Novice by knocking it around on the ground, looking for a perfect pass, but when you move on to the Super Cup and Professional level, you'll have to mix it up by playing high balls and taking shots on the volley. Also, the opposition will score freely, so you must not waste your power-ups and you'll need to learn how to hit perfect supershots.

But as with all *Mario* sports games, it is in the multiplayer that *Smash Football* excels. The pitches are so small and the action so fast-paced that even a two minute match can result in a 4-3 thriller.

Yet while *Mario Smash Football* is a decent five-a-side knockabout, it clearly hasn't been shown much Nintendo loving. Unlike in *Mario Superstar Baseball*, the pitches are bland and the Mushroom Kingdom crowd are just cardboard cut-outs of Toads, Koopas and Yoshis. What's worse is the teams – you can choose a captain, but the rest of your team is made up of four of the same secondary characters – Toads, Hammer Bros, Koopas and the ever-annoying Birdo. And if you thought that was bad enough, every goalkeeper is a Kremling. Also, there are no mini-games and very few new pitches or characters to unlock, so once you've beaten Bowser's team and won the Mushroom Cup, there's little point in carrying on to the Super Cup.

So what we've got is *Sega Soccer Slam* with some Nintendo characters and power-ups hastily thrown in. Nintendo love? It's more of a Nintendo wet kiss. This is simply not good enough.

TOM EAST

WHO ARE YER?
This, in a nutshell, is everything that is wrong about Mario Smash Football. When you win the Bowser Cup, you'll play Bowser's Super Team. Expecting a team of Bowser and Baby Bowsers? Wrong! You play a team of robots. Who are they? Answers on a postcard.

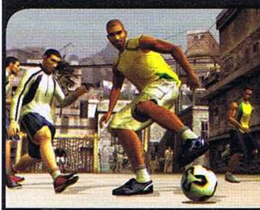
> **DESPITE SHELLS FLYING ALL OVER THE PLACE, IT IS A DECENT FOOTBALL GAME**


- Fast-paced action.
- The supershots are quite funny.
- Fun multi-player.


- It hasn't been given the Nintendo treatment.
- Kremlings in goal.


IF YOU LIKE THIS...

FIFA Street
EA
NGC/105 71%
Doesn't match EA's other *Street* games, but this is good arcade footy action.




6 VISUALS
The characters are fine, but the stadiums are awful.


5 SOUNDS
A complete lack of atmosphere from the cardboard fans.


6 MASTERY
Mostly smooth, but it gets a bit jerky when Bowser turns up..


6 LIFESPAN
Multiplayer is fun, but there aren't enough unlockables.

VERDICT
A decent five-a-side game, but it lacks the attention to detail we've come to expect from Mario sports games.



"He's half the spider you think he is"



ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

With great power comes... great disappointment?

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
DEVELOPER	TREYARCH
PLAYERS	1
MEM. CARD PAGES	4
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40

Hold everything. If you played *Spider-Man 2*, you might remember that the most annoying bits of the game were the clumsy kids losing their damn balloons every six seconds, forcing you to abort a perilous dash across the city to look for a tiny floaty thing on the rooftops. Irritating, no? Well, *Ultimate Spider-Man* lets you get revenge. The first time you jump into Spider-villain Venom (now the playable character for about a third of the game) you learn to replenish your powers by snacking on an innocent toddler with a balloon. This is a game so desperate to please that it lets you *eat children*. It's *got* to be good. Hasn't it?

In certain ways, *Ultimate Spidey*'s a bit of a backward step from *Spider-Man 2*. It's most obvious in the little shifts to the control scheme: instead of holding down and releasing the button to power up a jump, you just press it and then hold it down in the air. There's also a new double-jump, and wall-running's been made slightly less effective. And, try as we might, we could *not* manage to swing around a lamp-post.

These might seem like minor changes, but they seriously affect the way you play – extended web-swinging now takes a backseat to simple jumping and zipping, which is more player-friendly, but a lot less 'Spider-Man'. Then there's the visuals – up close, the cel-shading perfectly captures the look of the comic's inking style. At a distance, though, it looks a bit jagged.

The city's even more disappointing – there isn't the same

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

No longer the king of swing



△ Spidey stops the criminals by punching their car.



△ Mmm... fighting.



△ Mmm... balloons.



△ American Football's tricky at the best of times...



- Plenty to do.
- Clever boss battles.
- Nice inking style.
- Lets you eat kids.



- Irritating banter.
- Not quite as impressively 'epic' in feel as the last one.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction
Vivendi
NGC/110 79%
Like Venom's style? Hulk's the same PLUS bus surfing.



"GET... IN... MAH... BELLY!"

Munching on toddlers with Spidey's nemesis



Venom hasn't got Spidey's web-swinging abilities, but he's got a jump like a flea and he smashes whatever he lands on. Just tap R to propel yourself skywards and safely out of danger.



In place of the web-zip – the easiest way of propelling yourself over flat areas – Venom can use his tentacles to drag himself towards buildings. It isn't quite as fast or dependable, but it beats walking.



Venom's a bit handier in a fight than Spidey – he might not have the witty repartee or elegant combos, but he's got fists like hams and a nasty set of tentacles that'll whip attackers into oblivion.



Best of all, Venom can 'absorb' people's energy when you hold L. Great when you're fighting as him and need a top-up, really annoying when you've nearly beaten him in a scrap and he does it to you.

7 VISUALS



Stylised up close, but woeful in the pop-up department.

6 SOUNDS

Shut up, Peter. Just shut up for one second. *Please.*

8 MASTERY

It's like they've dumbed down the last game.

6 LIFESPAN



Lots to find, but the main game's barely eight hours.



△ Poor Spidey. All the head-squishing-into-tarmac action is taking its toll.



△ It's hard to be sneaky and diligent when your left leg has disappeared.



△ The city's not as great as it could be, but the swinging around is still ace.

sense of height seen in *Spidey 2*, and the pop-up's shocking, with big brown blocks constantly leaping into view as you swing through the city. And there's *loads* of swinging through the city – objectives are frequently jammed at opposite ends of the map. Instead of being optional – as in *Spidey 2* – you're forced to do half a dozen City Objectives between 'proper' missions that are disappointing. In the last *Spidey*, races took you down interesting avenues and past nice bits of architecture – here, they're just a way of killing time.

It's not all bad, though. The core fun of swinging around the city has barely diminished, and putting together combos – though they're never rewarded – is always fun. Spidey's also got new wall-bounce and web-twang fighting moves, which make combat more varied.

When you get into the story, it's excellent – wham-bam comic book styling makes the translation from in-game action to cutscenes perfectly, and loads of clever details will impress Spider-fans. Guest appearances from the likes of Wolverine are sure to please Marvel fans, and some of the boss battles – like the contractually obliged fight with Rhino that happens in *every Spidey game* – are brilliant.

Venom's a nice touch, too, though it's a shame he doesn't get more freedom to roam around the city.

In fact, this is the biggest disappointment of all – we were hoping for a huge, city-spanning scrap between the two arch enemies, but all of their showdowns take place in medium-sized, invisible-walled arenas.

Thanks for the baby-eating, Treyarch, but you're going to have to do better than that.

JOEL SNAPE

HEADS UP

It wouldn't be a superhero game without unlockable frippery, and Spidey doesn't disappoint. There is unlockable comic cover art dotted all around the city and beating characters unlocks their concept art or models. Nice touch.

> **"THIS GAME IS SO DESPERATE TO PLEASE THAT IT ACTUALLY LETS YOU EAT CHILDREN"**

VERDICT

Almost like a backwards step – feels much more kidsy than the last *Spidey*. Roll on Eliza Dushku in *Spider-Man 3*.





70

DIGITAL DESIRES

What a girl Sim wants, what a girl Sim needs.



Most 'wants' involve friends and housemates. The game ordered us to slap Torin, so we did. Being a man, he probably thinks he's in there now.



Sometimes a 'want' can involve little more than simply buying a new piece of furniture for the house. Such as this beautiful wild west slot machine, for example.



You'll live in mortal fear of the 'Change Outfit' task, which warrants a trip to the wardrobe subsection and a lifetime of saving and loading.



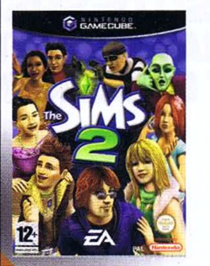
If your Sim fancies getting hitched, remember that the most romantic place for a proposal isn't necessarily the toilet. Especially when it's occupied.

THE SIMS 2

Get a life. And if that one goes wrong, just get another, and another, and another…

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	MAXIS
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	147
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40





Looks great on paper, *The Sims*. Play god with some babbling Simfolk who have lives, loves and desires just like us real-lifers. Get a job, shack up, marry off, pop a sprog. Keep your Sim clean, well-fed and successful – or torment them until they wet themselves and drop dead.

At its best, this edition really does sink its teeth into you. You want to know what happens next in your Simian soap opera, and experience new *Sims 2*-specific stuff like getting abducted by aliens or meeting tuxedo-wearer and probable serial killer Don. As with *Animal Crossing*, it's easy to get addicted to collecting new furniture – which is your reward for satisfying Sim 'wants' such as kissing a girl or slapping your cheating mate's cheeks off.

But, boy, does it get boring fast. The big problem with this digital doll's house is that, like *Bustin' Out*, you're at the mercy of the status bars that warn you when it's toilet time or shower hour. New *Sims 2* social skills – such as casually leaping into bed with all your housemates (see Love Affairs) – just give you more to fret about. It's almost impossible to squeeze any fun into a Sim's daily routine of paying the bills, scrubbing the shower and gazing brainlessly at Who Wants To Be A Simillionaire?

Maxis might be rather proud of the new 'Free Will' feature – which lets your Sim look after itself – but its inclusion is a foolish admission that having to manually visit the



LET'S PRETEND

Like previous instalments, The Sims 2 has a split-screen multiplayer, so you and someone you live with can pretend that you're, er, living together. Given The Sims' tortuously slow play though, it's not going to break the ice at parties like Mario Kart Double Dash!!.



THE SIMS 2

So many bins to empty, so little time



△ **"Oh, yes, I *love* ice cream." Another thrilling Sim conversation there. As well as the small talk, you can gossip, share a secret, or just forget all that and hop straight into bed.**

△ **The wave machine is one of the bits of kit that'll get a Sim physically pumped up.**

△ **As in the PC version, a Sim's naked bits are blurred out. Roll on the nudity cheat.**

LOVE AFFAIRS

***The Sims** part two puts an even greater emphasis on getting loved up. You can charm and make out with Sims of both sexes, building up to a quick tussle under the covers – embarrassingly dubbed a 'WooHoo'.*



toilet every ten minutes is as much fun as, well, having to *actually* visit the toilet every ten minutes. Free will's a bit *too* free anyway: we switched it off after the seventh time our Sim decided to ignore our orders and raid the fridge instead.

Talking of which, preparing dinner perfectly demonstrates *The Sims 2*'s agonising pace. It goes: open fridge, remove food, prepare food (40 seconds so far), stroll to table, sit down (50 seconds), eat food (1m 20s), stand up – and after all that, your Sim's supposed to do the washing up as well. It's all compounded by menu-based input that's about as much fun as tracking down options in Microsoft Word, as well as loading and saving times that kill the joy of changing clothes or building your own rooms (our patented Toilet Bar and Sauna took us ages).

There's a big bag of new features here, including old age and death. But *The Sims 2* isn't half as open-ended as it thinks it is. The funniest bits are usually bugs or oversights – for example, clicking 'kiss' while two sims are in bed together will make your lovebirds stand up, get dressed, walk around the bed and *then* embrace.

Sometimes, a la *Nintendogs*, *The Sims 2* tricks you into treating mathematically-controlled polygon models as living things. We were genuinely a bit miffed when our new bride reacted to our first kiss as a married couple by immediately running off for a dump. *Wearing her wedding dress*, mark you. But, for the most part, this is a game too bogged down in the clumsy minutiae of bin-emptying, mail-opening and floor-mopping tedium to keep you happy enough with the illusion for long.

MARK GREEN

DON'T FEAR THE REAPER

*Sims die with alarming regularity in **The Sims 2** – one of ours popped their clogs within a minute of us starting the game. Death isn't final here, though: as a ghost, you can haunt your flesh-and-blood friends, or pester the Grim Reaper to breathe life back into you.*

> **"THERE'S A BIG BAG OF NEW FEATURES HERE WHICH INCLUDE OLD AGE AND DEATH"**



- Funny animations (the first time).
- A chicken playing draughts.



- Quite restrictive with slow pace.
- PC controls haven't migrated well.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

The Sims: Bustin' Out
EA
NGC/89 82%
More play and less work minimises the *Sims*' dullness.



6 VISUALS

Lovingly animated at times, but generally pretty drab.

4 SOUNDS

Both Simlish and the stereo tunes get our backs up.

5 MASTERY

Decent conversion of a technically average original.

7 LIFESPAN

Good if you can clear your diary for the slooow *Sims* mode.

VERDICT

It's compulsive in fits and starts, but is generally what you'd expect from real life played out on a television screen.



"Lob a special banana ball"

Earn money to spend in the shop by winning mini-games.

Donkey Kong lobs a perfect pitch.

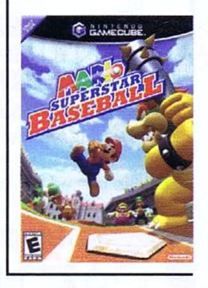
Doesn't matter if it's golf, football or baseball, Donkey Kong always uses his fist.

MARIO SUPERSTAR BASEBALL

Proof that baseball is better than football.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	NINTENDO
RELEASE DATE	NOV 11
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	10
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



It's such a shame that Nintendo couldn't show the same amount of love and attention to the world's biggest sport as they do to the American version of rounders.

> "BRILLIANT PITCHES, A FULL CAST OF GREAT CHARACTERS AND FUN LITTLE MISSIONS"

See, *Mario Superstar Baseball* is everything *Mario Smash Football* isn't. While *Football* is just *Sega Soccer Slam* with the plumber and (argh) Kremlings, *Baseball* has been given the proper Nintendo treatment. Of course that means some laughably "Oh Nintendo" naff dialogue, but it also means you get brilliant pitches, a full cast of great characters, mini-games and fun little missions in the middle of play.

When we played the Japanese version, the camera would often swoop in on individual players, but we didn't know why. With the UK version, we now know that these are Scout missions. So, for example, if you're about to pitch you could be told to get Peach out without letter her hit the ball – succeed and if you win the game, you'll unlock her for your team. So by the time you face Bowser's team in the final, you'll have a Nintendo all-star squad to pick from.

As for the actual baseball; the pitching is tactical as you have to mix it up by chucking in a few slow balls to confuse the batter. Alternatively, if playing as Donkey Kong, you could lob a special banana ball to get an easy strike.

Batting is much harder and you'll struggle to hit the ball in the first few innings. Even if you do, you'll often be caught out, unless the fielder is put off by a bum-nipping Chain Chomp. Unfortunately, aiming shots feels a bit random, and this is the only thing that prevents *Mario Baseball* from being up there with *Golf* and *Tennis*. Still, the action is fast-paced and it's great fun in multiplayer.

So, if you're after a Mario sports game this winter, ignore your instincts; leave *Football* on the shelf and go for *Baseball* instead. You'll be pleasantly surprised.

TOM EAST



- The stadiums are absolutely brilliant.
- Scout Missions add tension.



- Diddy's back.
- Hard to direct shots.
- The mini-games aren't very good.



Mario Tennis
EA
NGC/104, 91%
Really tough tennis game, but it's still the best Mario sports title around.



9 VISUALS
Bright and colourful – exactly what a Mario game should be.



The high-pitched "Strike" scream is annoying.

8 MASTERY
This is how a Mario sports game should be done.

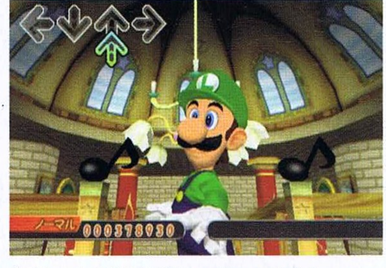
7 LIFESPAN
Plenty of characters and some mini-games to unlock.

VERDICT
No one will complain that Mario is being milked if he continues to star in sports games as good as this.





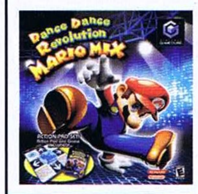
△ All the game's tunes are Mario remixes.



△ Bored of Mario? Then play as Luigi…



△ Mini-games include this whack-a-mole style Goomba bashing, which you can replay at your leisure.



△ You'll receive a grade at the end of each stage.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
DEVELOPER	KONAMI
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40 (INC. MAT)

DANCING STAGE MARIO MIX

Nintendo's hero turns into a boogie man.

After recently cropping up in all manner of places – thanks to a few odd cameos and numerous sporty spin-offs – the Mario gang has invaded yet another franchise; Konami's *Dance Dance Revolution* series.

Even if you're not on intimate terms with Konami's *DDR* games, you're almost certainly aware of them. You use a 'dance' mat instead of a joystick: a large, pressure-sensitive D-pad that rests on the floor to dance on as prompted by the screen. It's so, so simple; playing *Mario Mix* makes you jig about like a loon, a universal body language that needs no translation. And, if you're hoping to tackle the harder settings of *Mario Mix*, be warned: the effort of it will turn you into a human milkshake.

> **BEWARE OF HARDER LEVELS: THE EFFORT WILL TURN YOU INTO A HUMAN MILKSHAKE**

It being a *Mario* game, however, you shouldn't expect a bog-standard rhythm action experience. Typical *DDR* games feature wide selections of real-world pop tunes, a range of difficulty settings and little else, but *Mario Mix* has a full story and over a dozen mini-games to unlock and enjoy. The story itself is a bit weak, but it does mean that the background and set-up for each stage is different, and a treat for those who can't get enough of Nintendo's special little fat guy.

However, if you've had enough of the plump plumber, you'd best avoid *Mario Mix* like a barrel full of snakes, grenades and lawyers. But that doesn't change the fact that it feels like a more complete package than most dance-mat titles, and one that'll get the backsides of the Nintendo faithful shaking with joy.

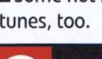
STEVEN BAILEY



- Mini-games and story complement the dancing.
- Some groovy tunes.



- Mario dances like a berk.
- Some not so groovy tunes, too.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Donkey Kong: Jungle Beat
Nintendo
NGC/103 87%
Another blend of rhythm-action adventure, but more rewarding.



7 VISUALS
Draws heavily on the Mushroom Kingdom – generic, but pretty.

7 SOUNDS
Some tunes are groovy, some are super-annoying.

7 MASTERY
It's all about shaking your ass, and very little else.

6 LIFESPAN
Story mode is brief, but there are mini-games to return to.

VERDICT

It's got good tunes, good mini-games and a good blend of Mario and rhythm action. But it's not great.



77



The Best Mobile Gaming Action
Asphalt Urban GT
Urban
You are taken out on 8 tracks inspired by genuine places. Each track is part of a specific graphic universe and includes different tunnels and elevations that enable you to perform impressive jumps,among other things ...
Prince of Persia Warrior Within
Prince
You enter a totally original universe, with 10 levels, on board a pirate ship and within ancient palaces that are swarming with evil forces. You'll have to confront pitiless enemies who each have different combat skills (life points, parade, aggressiveness).
New York Nights
New York
With its colorful graphics and its innovative and interactive gameplay, New York Nights creates a new standard for the simulation games style and its entertaining scenario, full of surprising twists and turns offer a great replayabilty.
Midnight Pool
Pool
Whether you're a beginner or an experienced pool player, the intuitive gameplay and realistic graphics will make for rapid and total immersion, allowing you to enjoy the game right from the break! Don't miss out.
Rainbow Six Lockdown
Lockdown
Tactics and action are at the heart of the explosive mixture embodied by Rainbow Six®. You'll have to make the right decisions at the right moment if you want to stay alive and save the hostage victims of a cowardly kidnap plot.
Vijay Singh Pro Golf 2005
Golf
You'll be playing on a dream golf course: the Harbour Town Golf Links at Seapines Resort in the United States. From total immersion in the universe of professional golf to a "Quick Play" game, a variety of modes are available to you.
Medieval Combat Age of Glory
NEW NO1 BEST SELLER
Combat
Age of Glory plunges you into the heart of fantastical medieval mythology. Demons or humans, it is up to you to choose which of the five initial combatants you will side with. The BEST Beat 'em Up on any mobile. Buy it now!
Sexy Poker 2004
Poker
Play saucy strip poker whenever you want... Animated using brilliant artificial intelligence, your sensual partners take great pleasure in adding a little fantasy to your mobile. But watch out, these girls aren't easy.
Splinter Cell Chaos Theory
Chaos
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£1.50 Each
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laugh2
laugh3
laugh4
laugh5
laugh6
laugh7
laugh8
laugh9



So Yoda can fly, but can he attach himself to enough Stormtrooper twoers to make a truck and petrol station?


Beatnik jedi, down and out in Coruscant…


Battle Droids audition for next-gen *Monkey Ball*


A pox on that glowing Lego jenga, we say…

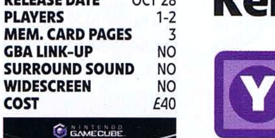




INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EIDOS
DEVELOPER	TRAVELLER'S TALES
RELEASE DATE	OCT 28
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	3
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£40





LEGO STAR WARS

Rebuilding the unholy trilogy, brick by brick.

You should have seen the new *Star Wars* films by now, if not to be entertained, then at least for the sense of closure you get from seeing Anakin have that helmet slapped on his head. Of course, listening to his woeful cry of "noooooooooo" as he sees what he's become, we're suddenly reminded that Lucasfilm should have called it a day right before the Ewok Caravan of 'Hate' and quit while they were ahead.

The cutscenes from *Lego Star Wars*, similarly, give the definite impression that the pimpled CGI character on screen has done a better acting job than Hayden Christensen did in the films, which is especially intriguing given that all the Lego men are mute. You won't get more intensity and emotion out of a man anwhere, Lego or otherwise, than you will in the snappy Episodes 1-3 highlights. Fortunately, the magical cutscenes aren't the only things worth playing *Lego Star Wars* for, as this simple co-op action game is bouncy enough to charm the pants off any jaded *Star Wars* fan.

> "ANAKIN SQUEEZES THROUGH HOLES AND EVEN JAR JAR IS USEFUL WITH HIS LEAPING"

The game takes us through Episodes *One*, *Two* and *Three*, allowing you to play as all of the major characters and take part in every set piece. The action is mainly blasting or slicing droids and double jumping over platforms, but swapping between cast members gives the game more depth as you're forced to combine their various skills. R2 can open doors, Anakin can squeeze through holes and even Jar Jar Binks comes in useful with his huge leaps. Consequently, the game manages to stay interesting.

Lego Star Wars's real success, though, lies in the fact that, while obviously targeted at kids, it's entirely unlike turgid, fiddly efforts such as *The Incredibles*, and is instead immensely playable and impeccably put together. It'll never reach *Metroid Prime* difficulty or *Zelda* depth – but it's not meant to. It's simple, almost effortless to play and all the better for it.

DAVID HARRISON



- The ease of play.
- The unspoken humour.
- Mace Windu's head.



- Loads of pointless 'busy' work.
- Should include the original trilogy.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Shrek 2
Activision
NGC/95 47%
Similar team based, multi-character cartoony action.





7 VISUALS
It doesn't push the Gamecube but is pleasing to the eye.

6 SOUNDS
There's no chatting in the cutscenes but the music is fitting.

6 MASTERY
Successful in its limited ambition – pretty entertaining.

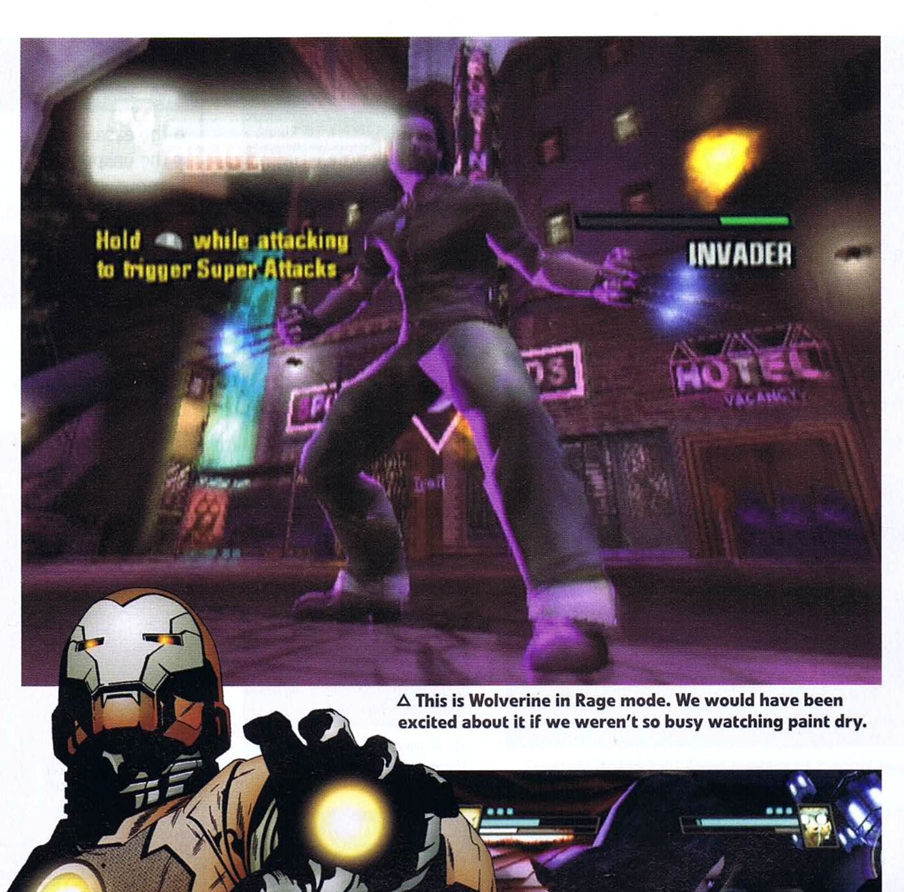


6 LIFESPAN
Very short game but plenty of replay in unlocking characters.

VERDICT

Simple, as easy as breathing, but hugely entertaining. A 'kids' game that can be played by anyone.





△ This is Wolverine in Rage mode. We would have been excited about it if we weren't so busy watching paint dry.





△ Bet her mother doesn't know she's out dressed like that.


△ Can you see? CAN YOU?! Rubbish.



△ Possibly the blandest opening level we've ever had to endure.



- Honestly?
- Er…
- Wait, perhaps?
- Nope, nothing.



- Shallow and dull.
- Presentation is monumentally awful.
- It actually exists.


IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Def Jam: Fight for NY
EA
NGC/99, 80%
See, EA *can* make a decent fighting game, if they make the effort.

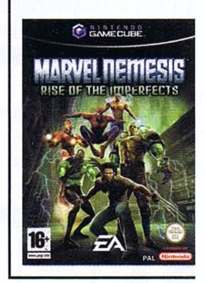


MARVEL NEMESIS
RISE OF THE IMPERFECTS

Imperfect by name, imperfect by nature.

INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	EA
DEVELOPER	EA
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-2
MEM. CARD PAGES	4
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
COST	£40



At times like this, all we want to say is "we hate it" and leave it at that. Then at least we'd be able to get on with the important business of sealing it in a bag and throwing it in the canal. Well, we should probably explain why.

> **"CINEMATIC CAMERA ANGLES ARE DISORIENTATING AND UNNECESSARILY IRRITATING"**

It's a bog-standard brawler – actually, make that *sub*-standard. Enter story mode and you're plunged into the 'thick' of the action, with a woefully unexciting scrap against three robot alien things that you have to defeat through repeated stabs of the A button – it doesn't get much better either. Subsequent levels feature a host of Marvel characters, ranging from the famous to the scraping-the-barrel-no-names, all of which play much the same in the shoddily presented levels.

There's simply nothing redeeming about it *at all*. The camera's decision to leap about for more 'cinematic angles' when you execute an attack is disorientating and unnecessarily irritating. The fighting system is laughably simplistic, offering Attack, Jump and use of the shoulder triggers to perform a special attack or movement like *Prince Of Persia*-style wall running. Occassionally you have to face a boss, which is basically a one-on-one fight with another famous character. These are the 'best bits', if we can bring ourselves to describe them as such.

The final insult is the fact that, should you wish to play the equally rubbish multiplayer, you *have* to play through the relentlessly tedious Story Mode in order to unlock all the characters. It's like some cruel, sick joke – and we don't like it one bit.

GERAINT EVANS

3 VISUALS
Satisfactory character models but all-round *rubbish* presentation.

4 SOUNDS
We stopped playing 5 minutes ago, but just can't remember.

3 MASTERY
The only thing this can claim mastery of is… er… um…

3 LIFESPAN
The lower your IQ, the longer you'll keep this in your GC.

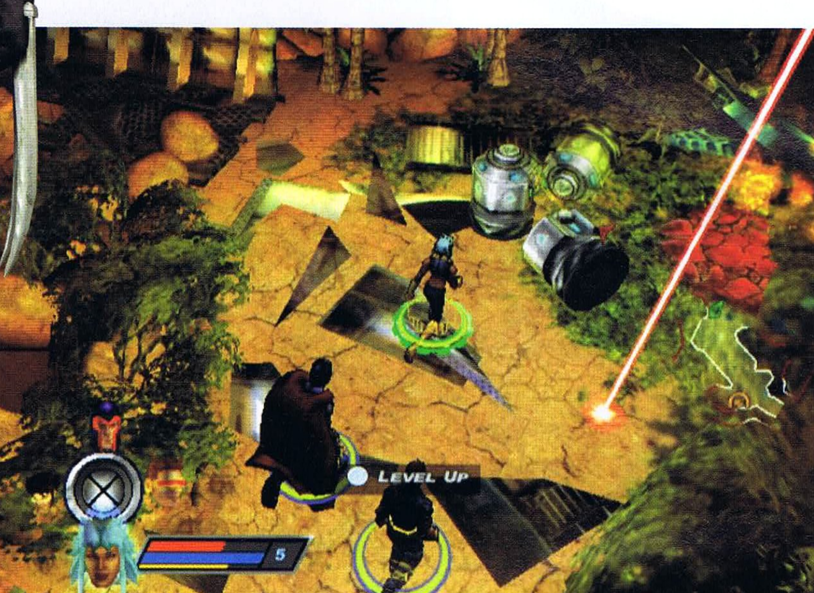


VERDICT
Somewhere in this world are a bunch of people who feel *very* ashamed of themselves…





This is your base – not a patch on Xavier's mansion.



Soloing with four party members is simple, as the game prompts and alerts you to any problems.



- Great co-op.
- Loads of content.
- Rewarding RPG elements.



- It's not that pretty.
- Loads of slowdown.
- Story isn't as good as before.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance
Interplay/Vivendi
NGC/81 80%
A good, if more traditional, co-op dungeon/RPG crawl.



6 VISUALS
Poor character models and some dull environments.

7 SOUNDS
Decent enough, with some sound voice acting and quips.

7 MASTERY
Some annoying slow-down when things get busy.

7 LIFESPAN
With mates, you'll play through the 15-20 hours a few times.

VERDICT
This is as solid and enjoyable a hack and slash co-op dungeon crawl as you're likely to get your mitts on.




INFO BURST

PUBLISHER	ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER	RAVEN
RELEASE DATE	OUT NOW
PLAYERS	1-4
MEM. CARD PAGES	4
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES
WIDESCREEN	NO
COST	£35



X-MEN LEGENDS 2
RISE OF THE APOCALYPSE

A superhero hack'n'slash with love in its eyes.

This is one of those games that comes down to a simple matter of taste. At its most basic, it's a long-winded, repetitive hack and slash – an endless dungeon crawl against a seemingly relentless tidal wave of button-mashing fodder. Most of you are going to be put off by this, and if we didn't remember its predecessor with a degree of fondness, we'd feel the same.

The formula is just as before – a *Gauntlet*-style adventure set in the world of the X-Men. Your party of four characters must scrap their way to objectives, killing enemies and earning EXP. Slowly but surely, your repertoire of monster-killing skills increases, attacks get more flamboyant and enemies get tougher. And that's your lot.

"DESPITE A LACK OF CHARM, YOU CAN FEEL THE LOVE THAT'S GONE INTO MAKING IT"

But it *is* better than that. Even though it's visually unimpressive, with rife slowdown in the more hectic encounters and characters that often feel like they're wading through a swamp, it never really matters, because you can feel the love and consideration that's gone into creating it. While the story may lack the charm and pacing of the original, there's a great deal of content in here, as well as loads of playable characters that you can tinker with to your heart's content.

It's ugly, but actually very enjoyable and there's plenty to feel involved with. It gets better too – the co-op mode will make for a cracking week of evenings with your mates and, even if you're on your own, developers Raven have supplied a number of very considerate features to make your life easier. Pretty much any aspect of your party AI can be tweaked, from how they use health packs, to how they attack. It's the little details like this that help raise it above and beyond the sum of its parts.

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MARIO KART DS

Nintendo's internet racer finally makes it to the starting grid. Full review plus how to get online!

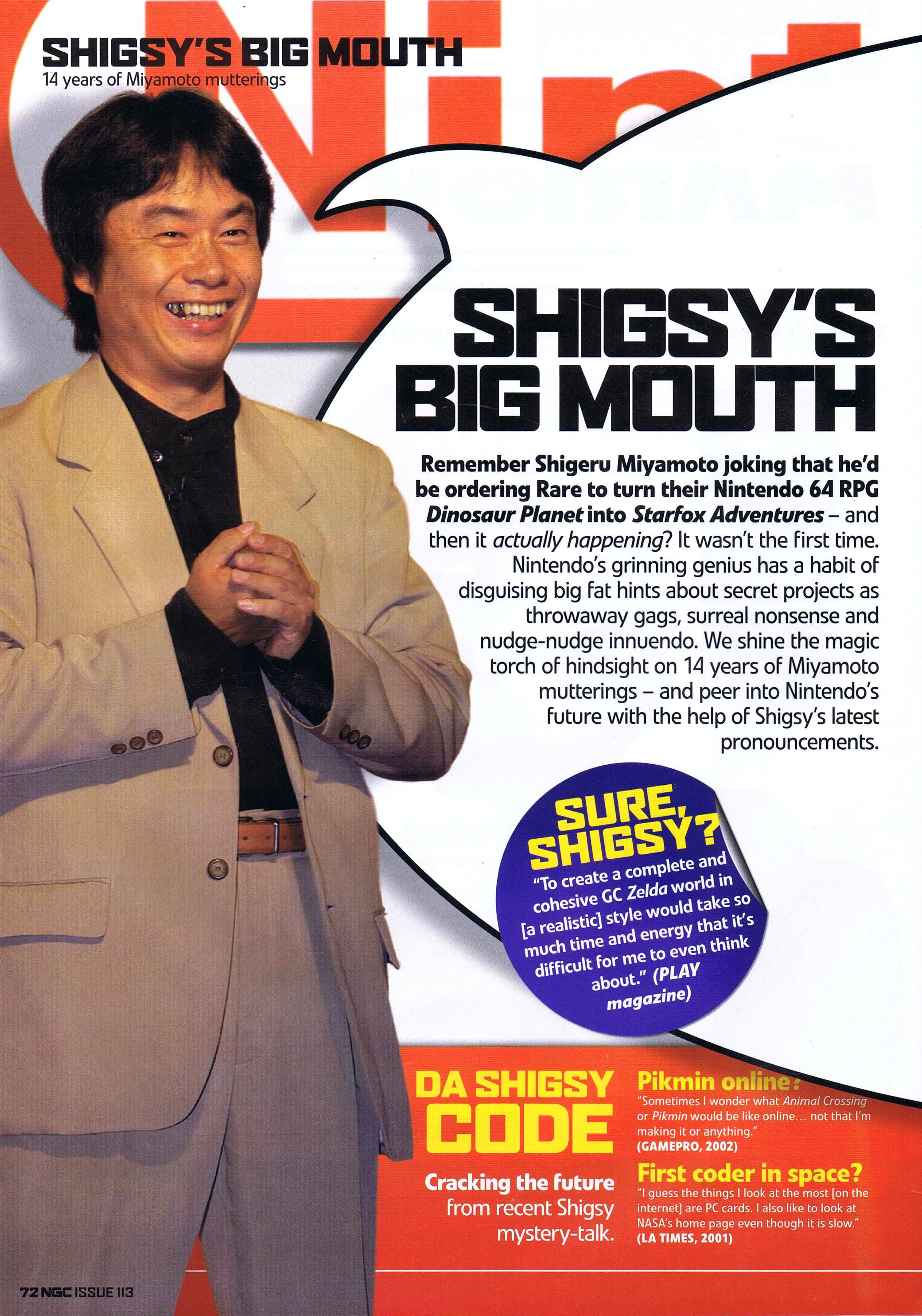
PLUS!

- *Peter Jackson's King Kong* reviewed
- *Gun* and *True Crime* blown to pieces
- Your complete guide to *Pokémon XD*

Magazine contents subject to change – but only for the better!

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SHIGSY'S BIG MOUTH

Remember Shigeru Miyamoto joking that he'd be ordering Rare to turn their Nintendo 64 RPG *Dinosaur Planet* into *Starfox Adventures* – and then it *actually happening*? It wasn't the first time. Nintendo's grinning genius has a habit of disguising big fat hints about secret projects as throwaway gags, surreal nonsense and nudge-nudge innuendo. We shine the magic torch of hindsight on 14 years of Miyamoto mutterings – and peer into Nintendo's future with the help of Shigsy's latest pronouncements.

SURE, SHIGSY?

"To create a complete and cohesive GC *Zelda* world in [a realistic] style would take so much time and energy that it's difficult for me to even think about." *(PLAY magazine)*

DA SHIGSY CODE

Cracking the future from recent Shigsy mystery-talk.

Pikmin online?

"Sometimes I wonder what *Animal Crossing* or *Pikmin* would be like online... not that I'm making it or anything."
(GAMEPRO, 2002)

First coder in space?

"I guess the things I look at the most [on the internet] are PC cards. I also like to look at NASA's home page even though it is slow."
(LA TIMES, 2001)



PAC-MAN

December 2001

(MAINICHI)

The question: "Name some non-Nintendo games you think are fun."

The answer: "[One] is *Pac-Man*… When someone with a background in design like me saw that, I felt like this was my true calling in life."

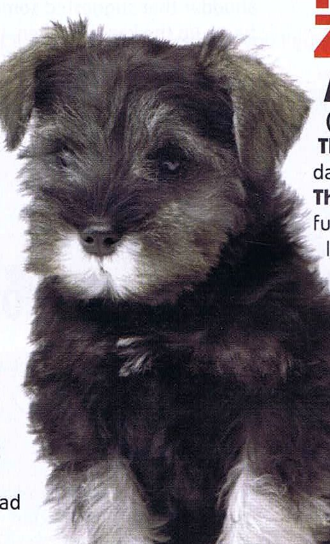
We should have known…: Should have been easy to work out, as Shigsy would usually rather admit to wearing a bra to work than enjoying a rival's game. By 2004, we'd discovered that the great man's Pac-love had grown so potent, he'd be rewriting history and pretending he'd written *Pac-Man* himself: *Pac-Man Vs* was a simple Shigsy remake that became one of the last dying yells of the swiftly drowning GC-GBA connectivity feature.

The lesson: If Shigsy mentions your game, Mr Developer, expect trouble.

NINTENDOGS

February 2003

(VIRGIN MEGASTORE)



The question: "What influences did you have while making *Zelda The Wind Waker*?"

The answer: "You may not believe it, but I have relationships with dog trainers. I have some serious conversations about: 'What does "Dog" mean?'"

We should have known…: After this the interviewers were probably staring at Shigsy as though he'd just tap-danced on the table in time to a self-penned song about his love for melons. It makes more sense when you realise a real-life puppy had just joined the Miyamoto family – but only when *Nintendogs* was announced did it become slap-of-the-forehead clear that Shigsy had been bringing his hobbies to work again.

The lesson: Don't write a letter to Miyamoto suggesting he takes up cross-stitch.



REALISTIC ZELDA

April 2003

(SUPERPLAY)

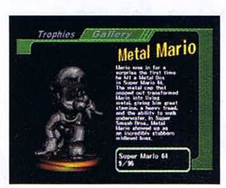
The question: "Shouldn't there be some room left for… a darker, more serious *Legend of Zelda*?"

The answer: "Sorry, but I can't talk about my plans for the future, but it is certainly possible that we will make a game like that."

We should have known…: As the fanboys circled around the new-look 'Celda' in 2002, Shigsy was firm that "*Zelda* wouldn't be *Zelda* if it looked like everything else". In February, he defied online petitions to state categorically that "a realistic *Zelda* would cause problems." Exactly one year later, the wind had changed: "There is definitely the possibility that we will create a more realistic *Zelda* game." But then, in the quote above, he's refusing to talk about "future plans". Ooh – the big tease…

The lesson: Keep everything Shigsy says in a big folder. Go on. It'll be *fun*.

SURE, SHIGSY? "Get accustomed to the GCN Controller because, 10 years from now, this controller will be the standard." *(press conference)*





METAL MARIO

May 1991

(MARIO STRATEGY GUIDE)

The question: "How do you explain the number of changes to Mario's appearance over the years?"

The answer: "Who knows how Mario will look in the future. Maybe he'll wear metallic clothes!"

We should have known…: Just a throwaway joke based on the old 'everyone wearing tinfoil suits in the 22nd century' chestnut? Or a genuine glimpse into the 'Metal Mario' power-up in *Super Mario 64*, a game that was still six years and one console away from release? We're going to go with the latter, because we're keen to believe that all Shigsy's ideas have a chance of becoming reality half a decade later. You know, what with *Super Mario 128* and all.

The lesson: Shigsy's jokes aren't meant to be laughed at.

DIRECTOR'S CUTS

May 2001

(E3 EXPO)

The question: "Do you think Japan-only games will come to the West now that discs are cheap?"

The answer: "Because of the [cartridge] format, I couldn't do things like Director's Cut versions of games. We'll now get to see those on discs."

We should have known…: Right, right. Innocent question about obscure Japanese games heading West, and Shigsy's off on one. Clearly that dodgy barnet was covering up a patch of brain already throbbing bright red with the idea of resurrecting the N64's *Ocarina of Time Ura* (aka *Master Quest*) – effectively the only chopped Nintendo game anywhere near finished enough to be used as a "Director's Cut". Giveaway!

The lesson: Even Shigsy's vaguest ramblings are touched by truth. And madness.

Online Square game?

"[We've talked] with other companies about how we should go online. We have a cooperation with Square-Enix. Look for a hint hidden in *Animal Crossing*."
(FAMITSU, 2004)

Opera game?

"The opera for instance is very interesting and can be fun. A lot of people consider opera to be 'art' and very artistic but really… it's just entertainment."
(E3 EXPO, 2003)

Sherlock Holmes in space?

"[As a child I enjoyed] science fiction stories by Isaac Asimov among others, and detective stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle."
(GG8, 2000)





REVOLUTION CONTROLLER

May 2004

(E3 EXPO)

The question: "Which technologies or game ideas are you most impressed with?"

The answer: "I'm very interested in games… like *Samba de Amigo*, *EyeToy* and *Donkey Konga* that are fun to play and fun for people watching."

We should have known…: Obvious in retrospect, isn't it? Watch Nintendo's promo film of people using the Revolution controller (see p27) – it's all people making physical idiots of themselves flicking, pointing, waving, slicing and, in the case of the one we call The Funny Old Man That Topples Over Backwards, toppling over backwards. Shigsy was already hinting that The Revolution meant making you look like a moron in front of your mates.

The lesson: Shigsy doesn't mention other people's games just to be *nice*.

GC-GBA CONNECTIVITY

August 1999

(IGN)

The question: "What advantages would you say that Dolphin has over PlayStation 2?"

The answer: "We are now connecting N64 with Game Boy [and with Dolphin] and we may be able to even expand on Game Boy connectivity. That is something… only Nintendo can do."

We should have known…: A full year before Gamecube was properly named and GBA *announced* – let alone GC-GBA connectivity revealed – Miyamoto bungs a less-than-oblique hint straight at the media's face, and even expresses how Nintendo hope to trump the competition with the unique one-two punch of home and handheld. No one spotted it, even though Miyamoto's next answer spoke of how he was "thinking about how Nintendo should be in five years from now."

The lesson: Miyamoto say, sometimes biggest secret hidden in plain sight.







BAND BROTHERS

August 2004

(NEXT LEVEL)

The question: "What do you see for yourself in the future?"

The answer: "I've been practising musical instruments lately… My wife sings sometimes, so maybe she'll join me in a band. It's my secret mission!"

We should have known…: Up until this interview, Shigsy had greeted tiresome questions about his banjo-playing with a slight but recognisable shudder that suggested someone was one question away from getting a banjo up the kazooie. Then, he goes all *X-Factor* on us, chatting away about musical collaboration as though Nintendo were planning a game about it. On, say, a new handheld system. (Nintendo announced *Band Brothers* the following month.)

The lesson: If a journalist mentions the banjo and actually lives to tell the tale, it's a scoop.

NINTENDOGS (again)

February 2003

(SUPERPLAY)

The question: "Have you been thinking of ways to implement your new dog into future games?"

The answer: "I don't specifically take my hobbies and try to tie them to a game or anything but… interacting with a dog is just a game for me."

We should have known…: Only *one week* after the "I've been talking to dog trainers" interview, along comes this. There's no room here to print the full answer – newfound puppy lover Shigsy launched into a full after-dinner speech about how stupid we all are for chatting to real dogs. A few months later, he's telling us all to talk to the fake dogs that came out of his head. Straight into the doghouse for the interviewer, then, who swallowed the evasive answer.

The lesson: Believe the exact opposite of everything he says. Agh – he wasn't pleased to meet us at all!

PILOTWINGS 64

June 1995

(SUPER PLAY)

The question: "What are you doing in America?"

The answer: "I'm working with Paradigm Simulations… We want to use their experience and technology. Flight simulation expertise, for example…"

We should have known…: Super Play gave Mr M a gentle prod about a sequel to much-loved Super Nintendo sky trip *Pilotwings* – and got an answer so suggestive that it'd be no surprise to learn Shigsy lifted his trouser leg and licked his lips while giving it. But these were innocent days, and this scoop was buried amidst Shigsy revealing how he imagines French developers spending their days "on a veranda listening to a serenade". *Pilotwings 64* was official a few months later.

The lesson: Shigsy wants you to play dot-to-dot *with your mind.*

Clean Mario GTA?

"Apparently many older gamers like *Grand Theft Auto*, but… it's our task to find new ways and create substitutes. It is our duty to produce alternatives to *GTA*."
(SUPERPLAY, 2003)

Real feel controls?

"I would not make it so… the player can use the controller to 'pull' and open a door. I concentrate on this interactiveness the most."
(NINTENDO, 2001)

Karaoke gaming?

"I actually don't want Link to talk very much. Maybe I'll record my own voice for when he talks, or maybe you can record your own voice."
(NEXT LEVEL, 2004)



REVOLUTION'S BACK CATALOGUE

February 2004

(C&VG)

The question: "Would Nintendo ever consider making games purely for an adult audience?"
The answer: "Now that the people who used to play with NES are parents, the circumstances are there for the whole family to enjoy playing videogames."
We should have known...: Revolution's controller is designed for first-time players like The Funny Old Man That Topples Over Backwards (see opposite). In contrast, Shigsy's comment here about oldsters who've actually been gaming *their whole life* seems like a big fat hint about Revolution's downloadable avalanche of old gaming. He claimed Revolution will appeal to everyone "from very small children to their grandfathers and grandmothers". Which makes us feel very old indeed.
The lesson: Name-dropping old consoles isn't just a sign of old age. He's 50, you know.

SOULCALIBUR II

September 2000

(MSNBC)

The question: "From games you have seen on PlayStation 2, has anything left you impressed?"
The answer: "I think *Tekken Tag Tournament* is very well done and a lot of people are enjoying it. The mission of game creators should be: what kind of new software should we be looking forward to?"
We should have known...: Same story as *Pac-Man Vs.* Shigsy hands out compliments less frequently than he rides a horse into work, so this surprising backslap for Namco should have set alarm bells ringing. Within a year, Namco – who'd kept pretty much clear of the Nintendo 64 – revealed feisty fighter *SoulCalibur II* on GC, *and* got permission to use Link in the game to... what's that? You think Shigsy was just making an innocent compliment? Have you learnt *nothing*?
The lesson: These hindsight spectacles are brilliant.

SURE, SHIGSY?

"Game creators are putting so many minigames in games today. I am concerned that they're spending too much energy on these."
(press conference)

Freeform maps?

"One thing we may need to reflect upon is that players have to clear all of the stages [in *Mario Sunshine*] in order to get to the final one."
(NINTENDO, 2002)

Packing it all in?

"A lady came up to me in the park. She recognised me and asked me what the best game was for her boy. I told her, 'Tell him to go and play outside.'"
(JAPANINC, 2003)



ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN





WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The young Peter Parker in the Ultimate Marvel universe, taking on the kinds of foes he never fought until he was an adult. Plus, his secret identity isn't all that secret! But can the game throw up as many surprises as the comics? Not if you read our SPOIL-TASTIC boss guide. You have been warned...

WHAT WE SAID THIS ISSUE!

When you get into the story, it's excellent – wham-bam comic book styling makes the transition from in-game action to cutscenes perfectly, and loads of clever details will impress Spider-fans.

NGC 70

BOSS STRATEGIES

Fighting the biggest, baddest and hairiest enemies Spider-Man has to offer...

#1: VENOM VS. WOLVERINE

This is a tutorial fight, admittedly, but it's not without its own challenges. Wolverine is downright lethal close-up, with an assortment of vicious claw combinations and a devastating throw.

In the initial exchange of blows, remember that, as Venom, you can dine upon the bar's other patrons for a quick health boost. Also remember that you enjoy a tremendous amount of range and power with your potent tentacle slaps. You can easily get away from Wolverine by tentacle-zipping to the far wall, then smacking him as he races towards you.

Once the fight heads into the dojo next door, things will get a bit harder, as there are no handy health restores around. On the plus side, the higher ceiling lets you use Venom's superior jumping ability to your advantage.









△ If Wolverine's this close, start thinking of ways to knock him away.

TIPS EXTRA

THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING...



ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

ARACHNOMAN
Finish 90 City Events, collect 90 Tokens and finish 48 Combat Tours.

PARKER HOODIE
Finish 75 City Events, collect 75 Tokens and finish 32 Combat Tours.

#2: SPIDER-MAN VS. RHINO

If you stick close behind the Rhino, you'll trail him to a construction site. If the Rhino's allowed to lift the fuel tank and throw it, it's an instant game over. To prevent this, jump at his back and press X to cling on, then mash on B to punch him. He'll try for a back body drop to get you off, so when you see the Rhino spread his arms, jump away.

Once he's angry, try to get him to punch the ground over by the pool of wet cement. This'll stick him in place long enough for you to nail him with the wrecking ball.

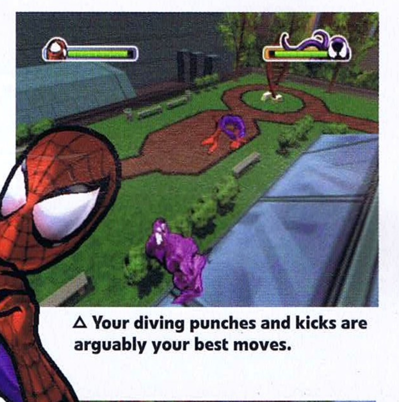
With that done, race after him, jump on his back, and start pounding the hole in his armor with punches. You can only cling on once he's stopped sparking, so dodge until then. Between back-pounding sessions, keep to a safe distance; you've got too much speed and hang time for the Rhino to reliably keep up. If he does hit you, he'll knock you into Ultimate Spider-Man 2.





△ Escape from Venom the same way you'd lift a car, by hammering L and R.

#3: SPIDER-MAN VS. VENOM



△ Your diving punches and kicks are arguably your best moves.

If you stick close to Venom for too long, Spidey will develop a massive headache and be unable to move. This'll usually end with Venom absorbing you, regaining health while draining Spidey's.

Your most reliable damage option is to bounce around and use Spidey's homing aerial kick (Y in mid-air) to smack Venom for two hits at a time, then bound away and dodge his tentacle swats.

This'll take a little while, but it's pretty safe. Just keep pounding Venom with dive kicks. The advantage to doing this is that Spidey winds up a short distance behind Venom, which gives you plenty of room in which to dodge his next attack.

△ Ground combos are risky, but can really pay off.



SPIDEY WRESTLING
Finish 30 City Events and collect 30 Tokens.

PETER PARKER
Finish 50 City Events, collect 50 Tokens and finish the 4th Race Against Johnny Storm.

SWITCH HERO OPTION
Finish all of the Story Missions.

SYMBIOTE SPIDER-MAN
Finish 100 City Events, collect All Tokens and finish all of the Combat Tours.

VENOM RACES
Finish all of the Story Missions.

HARD DIFFICULTY
Complete 20 City Events and finish Chapter 8, Class Trip.

MEDIUM DIFFICULTY
Complete 10 City Events and finish the Inexpugnable chapter.

HEALTH BONUS & HARD COMBAT TOURS
Complete 10 City Events and finish the Inexpugnable chapter.

HEALTH BONUS & MEDIUM COMBAT TOURS
Complete eight Easy Combat Tours after finishing Chapter 4, Hell of a Mess. the Inexpugnable chapter.

INSANE DIFFICULTY COMBAT TOURS
Complete 10 City Events and finish the Inexpugnable chapter.

MARVEL NEMESIS: RISE OF THE IMPERFECTS

SPECIAL CARD CHEAT CODES
Go to the Options menu, then select the Cheats option and enter these codes.

THEHAND
Elektra swimsuit model card



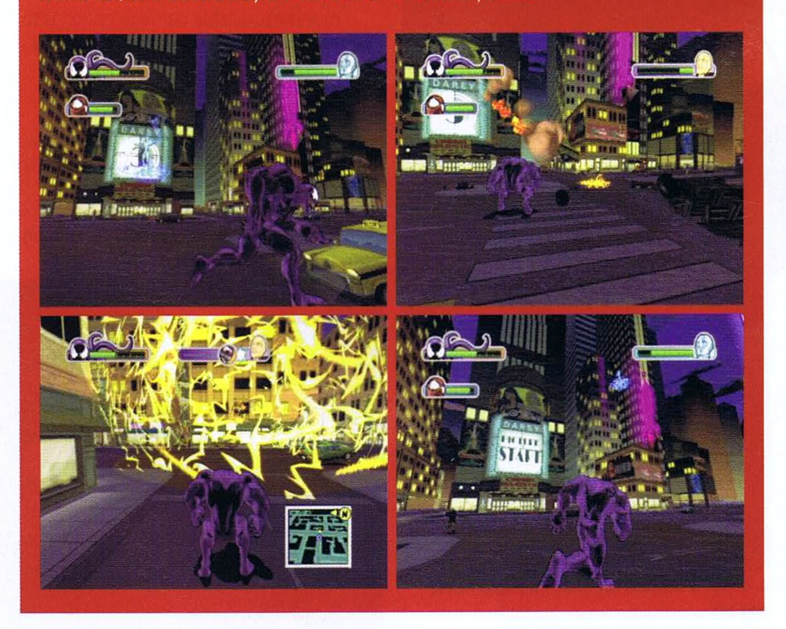
#4: VENOM VS. ELECTRO

Give chase. This is harder than you'd think, because Venom isn't as fast as Spidey. It's not how fast you are; it's how smart you can race.

If you get too close to Electro, he'll use a giant field attack to send you flying, and he may occasionally pitch a lightning bolt. Learn to anticipate the field attack, and if possible, feed while Electro's immobile. Whatever you do, don't get hit by it, as it's easy to get thrown so far back that you'll instantly lose the mission.

Once you reach Times Square, violence will ensue. Venom can't touch Electro, so you'll need to do your fighting by throwing cars at him. Your biggest danger in the first stage of the fight is Electro's giant field attack, which hurts more now than it did at the beginning of the battle.

When you deplete Electro's first health bar, he'll drain energy from the city and assume a new form. Now, when you hit Electro with a car, he'll be temporarily de-powered and ready for a solid, mundane thwacking with fists and tentacles. You can also take a huge amount of his health off by slamming a de-powered Electro with a car, or if Electro's by a wrecked car when it explodes.



#5: SPIDER-MAN VS. THE BEETLE

Rush the trapped civilians to the paramedics that'll arrive at the top of the ramp to the tunnel. Once they're both safe, head through the tunnel to pursue the Beetle through the city. He'll drop a forcefield; don't waste any time messing with it and just climb up the tunnel wall to circumvent it.

A chase scene ensues. Keep pace with the Beetle until he blows open a skyscraper, then rescue the woman inside. This marks a checkpoint.

Continue your pursuit. Stay well above street level to avoid the traps he'll set, and swing high to avoid the forcefields he'll throw up to block your progress. Use webzips when the pursuit goes through the park, and keep up the speed.

When you finally catch up to the Beetle, take it to the air. You'll need to go after him with your diving air kick, as he doesn't like to stick around and let you ground-combo him. Just keep dodging his attacks and going for quick hit-and-run moves. The best place to fight him is down a floor from your starting point, where he has to enter your range to attack you.









TIPS EXTRA

CONTINUED...

REIKO
Solara swimsuit model card

MONROE
Storm swimsuit model card.

UNLOCKABLE CHARACTERS
You can unlock characters to play in Versus mode.

BRIGADE
Beat Brigade in Iron Man's third mission.

DAREDEVIL
Beat Johnny Ohm in Daredevil's third mission.

FAULT ZONE
Beat Fault Zone in Storm's third mission.

HAZMAT
Beat Hazmat in Magneto's third mission.

HUMAN TORCH
Beat Altered Thing in Human Torch's third mission.

IRON MAN
Defeat Brigade in Iron Man's third mission.

MAGNETO
Defeat Hazmat in Magneto's third mission.

NILES VAN ROEKEL
Complete Story mode.

PARAGON
Complete Story mode.

SOLARA

#6: VENOM VS. SILVER SABLE

This is, thankfully, one of the easier fights in the game. There are plenty of bystanders around to regain health with, and Sable's an unremarkable brawler. Her most dangerous attack is when she jumps backward and opens up on you with her sidearm, but you can run to either side to avoid her fire. Toss cars at her whenever you can, as that does a lot more damage than simple claws or tentacle swats.


△ As with Wolverine, you have a substantial range advantage on Sable...


△ ...which is good, because she can take you apart close up.


△ Don't forget to throw cars at people! It's good, and good for you.


△ There's really no reason to use Venom's claws when he's got tentacles.

#7: SPIDER-MAN VS. THE GREEN GOBLIN

The Goblin's not hard to keep up with, but at the same time, you can't let him get as far ahead as you could with the Beetle or Electro. Once you've pursued him halfway across the city, he'll wreck some scenery and force you to rescue some people. Shortly after, it's time for another boss fight.

This will take some time. The Goblin's usually surrounded by flames, which makes touching him a bad idea. Webs are useless, so you have to wait for him to burn himself out. Watch carefully for when the flames die, then rush in and bludgeon the Goblin to the street with a five-hit combo.

The tricky part of this battle is dodging the Goblin's fireballs, which tend to track you. Simply staying in motion isn't enough to get out of a fireball's way; you have to actually watch the Goblin and hop gently over the fireball as it comes towards you. Don't go for a full-strength jump, or a double jump, as those'll leave you vulnerable to any followup fireballs that the Goblin might toss. Incidentally, just moving out of the way is enough to dodge the Goblin's overhead punch.

Once you've got Gobby down to half life, he'll toss you into a courthouse to finish the job. He'll start hopping all over the screen with his axehandle punch, and occasionally deliver a giant explosion of flame that'll cover about half the room; that explosion is the prelude to his period of vulnerability. These aren't as dangerous as his fireballs, which are harder to dodge in the cluttered courthouse. On the plus side, you can use the furniture for cover. Continue to evade the Goblin's attacks and lay in ground combos when he's vulnerable.

#8: VENOM VS. BEETLE


△ Smack the Beetle out of his laser move, rather than trying to

After an easy chase scene, it's time for a full-on supervillain throwdown. The real problem Venom has is catching Beetle, as he's far faster and more manueverable than you are. The best way to damage him appears to be to wait until he extends his blades, then toss a forklift at him while he's preparing to dive at you.

Once you've knocked off about a third of the Beetle's life, he'll spring a trap, sealing you inside a forcefield with him. The trick here is to stay as close to the Beetle as you can, and nail him with tentacle whips every time he tries to use his laser. A few doses of that, and he'll go back to trying to nail you with the blades. When he pauses just before the dive, lay into him with another tentacle combo. This may be a close one, but you can pull it out if you don't take too many hits.







Beat Solara in Venom's third mission.

STORM
Beat Fault Zone in Storm's third mission.

VENOM
Beat Solara in Venom's third mission.

MARIO SUPERSTAR BASEBALL

SECRET MAP
Beat every mini-game once and buy Toy Field from the Item Shop. Now you can pass through a warp pipe that will take you to Toy Field.

MINI GAME GRAND PRIX
Play through all the mini games in a random order in the Grand Prix.

GRAND PRIX MODE
Beat all the mini-games on Star difficulty.

STAR DASH MINI-GAME
Complete Challenge Mode.

SECRET CHARACTERS

BABY LUIGI
Complete Challenge Mode with Yoshi.

DIXIE KONG
Complete Challenge Mode with Donkey Kong.



#9: PETER PARKER VS. SILVER SABLE

Waste Sable's backup. They're ordinary thugs, but they're a pain. Next up, take the lady herself down. She's hard to fight, as she'll block pretty much everything you throw at her, but you can whittle her down with air dives and the odd ground hit. The most important thing is to avoid her gunfire, as taking another dart will wear away at Peter's health.

Also, stay on the bridge. Without webs, you've got no way to prevent yourself falling into the river. Once you've got Sable down to about 25% of her health, you'll have to break off the fight to save a few accident victims. You need to go after the red compact hanging off the bridge first, then save the guy in the burning car behind you. Now, save the guy hanging off the supports by climbing up one of the pylons, then drop down to lift the final car.











#10: SPIDER-MAN VS. VENOM

As you're chasing Eddie across New York, just try to stay within a block of him. He's way too easy to lose in ground clutter, so rely on your map and just swing in his general direction. Eventually, you'll wind up fighting Venom in a crowded intersection, and he's gotten smarter.

The tactics from your last bout won't work as well. Venom will lay into you with a four-hit ground combo if you get close, and will toss cars if you take it to a distance. The best times to hit him are after he lashes out with an unsuccessful attempt at a combo -- keep your distance and wait for him to roar -- or while he's going to pick up a car.

Try for a ground combo of your own while Venom's roaring, as you can stun him with the first few hits and get some serious damage in.

#11: VENOM VS. CARNAGE

Carnage doesn't have the punch or the agility that Venom does. What it does have are staying power and sheer tenacity. After it's been beaten thoroughly enough, it'll retreat to a far corner of a room, or another room entirely, and regenerate. You can interrupt this by hitting it, but that can a difficult process.

Once you've beaten Carnage down to roughly 20%, it'll do a runner and slam the door behind it. Give chase quickly, before Carnage regenerates all its lost health. Along the way, you can grab lab technicians and security guards to restore your own lost vitality.

Carnage's attacks include a short-ranged tentacle flurry and a long-ranged poke, much like Venom's own. The flurry's the more dangerous, as it'll knock you flying and interrupt your combos. Other than that, use your tentacles to bludgeon Carnage mercilessly, anywhere it goes.









△ **Carnage has just as much range as Venom does, and he loves to use it.**

READERS' TOP TIPS

Found an interesting tip, secret or bug in one of your Gamecube, GBA or DS games? Email us – ngc@futurenet.co.uk. Each month we'll print our favourites in this Reader Tips section, and if yours is the best tip of the month we'll send you something nice. But don't send us button codes from the net. Or dead animals.



LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

Use a Deku Leaf to blow off a travelling merchant's hat. This will reveal a hidden race.
George Butcher, Salisbury

POLARIUM

At the end of each level in Challange mode a pink row will appear, giving you 10,000 points and clearing the screen once you've destroyed the lines below it. Don't use it! Keep one line underneath, and continue playing. If you get stuck later on, destroy the bottom line to clear the screen. It's really helpful if you get past the fifth and sixth levels.
Jack Parker, via email

CASTLEVANIA: DAWN OF SORROW

On the Start menu, press B (or don't press anything for about ten seconds). Now you'll see a really cool anime intro to the game.
Ruben Larsen, Norway

#12: SPIDER-MAN VS. VENOM

The biggest advantage you have in this final brawl is that Trask doesn't have a lifebar, as such. If Venom's left alone for too long, he'll push the helicopter over the side of the building, but he cannot "kill" Trask the way that, for example, Electro could've killed Spidey during that battle.

Towards that end, you can play this safely by using Trask as bait. Whenever Venom tries to run over and kill Trask, come up behind Venom and punch him in the back of the head. He'll react by attempting to murder you, either by throwing bits of scenery at you or with tentacles. Both can be dodged via a simple overhead jump.

As the fight progresses, the fire will spread, leaving you with less room to work with. On the plus side, Venom will lose interest in you faster, allowing you to pummel his backside more often. Keep up your assault until he falls!







△ **You can also fake Venom out and hit him right after he finishes a combo.**



WWE DAY OF RECKONING 2

Here's how to get an easy win in Day of Reckoning 2: Clothesline an opponent, quickly clothesline the ref, then go out of the ring, grab a weapon and hit the opponent about three times before putting the weapon down. Finally pin the guy or keep on stomping on him until he has DANGER state.
Lee Emmott, Leeds





METROID PRIME HUNTERS: FIRST HUNT DEMO

Select Survivor, then go outside to the tower with the Morphball cannon in it. Look up to the top of the tower, jump onto it and climb up. At the top hold Left and Forwards and you'll fall off. If you do this correctly, you will fall through the wall and either explode or land in a secret room full of enemies.
Laurie Hardman, Brighton





With Mark Green

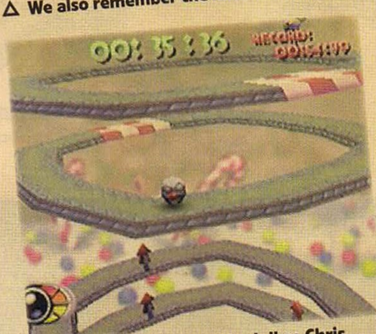
THE FAMILY TREE

The sordid history of today's biggest games.

Pac-Manniversary

This month... With *Mario Kart* approaching fast, here are six inventive racing ideas that went absolutely nowhere.

△ We also remember the idiot Taz stinking up the Nintendo 64 with *Taz Express*. Git.



△ Iggy's Reckin Balls: "As dull as Chris Tarrant," said N64/19.

COBRA TRIANGLE (NES, 1988)

Wet and wild follow-up to Rare's remote-controlled raceoff *RC Pro Am*. You'll rarely find a better mission-based speedboat racing game, and certainly not one with a giant sea monster and the angriest aggressive crab in videogames.

TAZ-MANIA (SUPER NINTENDO, 1993)

One of only a handful of history's on-foot racers – games that reckon early man should have thrown another mammoth on the barbecue instead of bothering with all that wheel rubbish. *Taz-Mania* remains one of the only games that encourages you to eat live birds whole.

EXERTAINMENT MOUNTAIN BIKE RALLY (SNES, 1994)

It's bicycle racing, for one thing. But it's more than that: it's *real exercise* – controlled by pedalling on an actual exercise bike, designed to help you cycle away the pounds in front of some pretty blocky racing. About as successful as a DVD player activated by doing push-ups.

IGGY'S RECKIN BALLS (N64, 1998)

The ugly young cousin of *Unirally* (featured last month), this was a sort of Scalextric with the cars replaced by horror-balls, and any possibility of fun removed by the unrelenting randomness of it all. Kittsy said "our copy will be gathering dust" in Issue 19. And it is.

CARMAGEDDON 64 (N64, 1999)

Briefly the hot biscuit on PC, this wasn't a bad twist on the whole racing genre. Oh, it was *bad* all right: tearing pedestrians in half with car bonnets for points had *The Daily Mail* ruffling its pages in righteous indignation. But, morals aside, the game was bloody good fun. Until the N64 version, that is. That really was bad.

For one thing: zombies. The Nintendo censors weren't having civilians disappearing under tyres on *their* watch, so the city became a nightmare town of shuffling shamblers, and *Carmageddon*'s gruesome appeal was lost. Possibly in a sympathy protest, the framerate and controls packed up and left too, leaving a confused shopping trolley racer which *still* had an adults-only rating.

Despite its lashings of body ketchup, *Carmageddon* was at heart a racing game – albeit one that kept the actual track layout to itself, leaving you to tear down a likely-looking road only to find yourself half a mile from the action.

We gave *Carmageddon 64* just 8% in Issue 36, and said that it would "violate your very soul with its shocking awfulness". A very special game, then.

BEATLES ADVENTURE RACING (N64, 1999)

Our backpage spoof on an actual game: the rather good VW-themed *Beetle Adventure Racing*. The real game ably brought platforming sensibilities to racing – our made-up version threw in a John and Yoko street chase through the centre of Leningrad. Gullible readers asked for it in shops. Fools!

RETRO NEWS

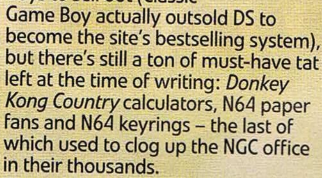
News rounded up from the wild world of retrogaming.



20-20 VISION

You'll find mention of Mario's 20th (or, more accurately, *Super Mario Bros*'s 20th) elsewhere in the mag, but don't miss the special website that Nintendo's put together for the occasion. It's promo-heavy, (see how many Game Boy Micro plugs you can spot before you run out of numbers), but there's plenty to enjoy: Japanese TV commercials featuring what we think are Asian celebs, reproductions of celebratory banners that have gone up around Tokyo and at least one feature that broke our web browser.
■ www.nintendo.co.jp/mario20th/

MEMORY MOUNTAIN



Ever-reliable cyberspace shop Lik-Sang recently moved warehouse – and, during the move, uncovered a treasure trove of '90s Nintendo quality goods cowering in a corner. It took just 24 hours for the mint boxed Super Famicoms and Game Boys to sell out (Classic Game Boy actually outsold DS to become the site's bestselling system), but there's still a ton of must-have tat left at the time of writing: *Donkey Kong Country* calculators, N64 paper fans and N64 keyrings – the last of which used to clog up the NGC office in their thousands.
■ www.lik-sang.com/news php?artc=3680

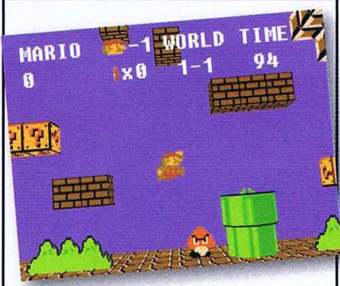
CRAFTY STUFF

Craftster.org (motto: "no tea cosies without irony") is rapidly becoming a breeding ground for Nintendo-related crafts created by people wielding knitting needles and duct tape. You'll recognise some stuff – like the Nintendo Chair from our feature in NGC/109 – but search for 'Nintendo' and you'll uncover Nintendo cookies, Nintendo pillows, Nintendo *controller* pillows, and loads more. A *Battletoads* 'quillow' for gran, perhaps?
■ www.craftster.org/



NET TENDO

3D mario is here!



If your eyes were sparkling after Richard Horsman's dimension-twisting retro imagery last month, prepare to have entire firework displays going off in your retinas with this – the same concept extended to a whole game. Nick Karstedt's *Super Mario Bros 2.5D* is a simple idea – Shigsy's original Goomba-stomping with the 2D imagery stretched towards the horizon to give a refreshing pseudo-3D look. Think we're idiots for falling in love with a remixed 20-year-old game that's only been mildly fancied-up? Download it. Play it. Apology accepted.
■ http://nickkarstedt.triplehelix.info/mario_2_5d

Gaming grows up



We're thinking of retiring this bit of the retro pages immediately, because *nothing* will top this. Meet the Gameman, created on a University of California course in Interdisciplinary Computing and... ah, forget all that. All you need to know is that it's a *seven foot tall Game Boy that plays actual Game Boy games.* The website was last updated in 2002 – so we've got a massive headstart already with three years of retro-based internet inferiority that hasn't come even slightly close. Bring on Gameman Advance.
■ http://gameman.loungespot.com/play/index.html

FIVE Things

The five strangest celeb-games in conceptual history

1



SHAQ FU

Gobsmackingly stupid idea that made NBA legend Shaquille O'Neale the star of his own *kung-fu fighting* game. What next from EA – rappers scrapping on the streets?

2



SOCKS THE CAT

Never actually made it to the shops – which meant the world was deprived of a platform game starring former US president Bill Clinton's cat. Aw, paw us.

3



GO! GO! BECKHAM

Only three years old so not strictly retro, but this super-cutesy adventure was basically classic 2D *Mario* featuring a bloke better known for bending than u-bends.

4



MICHAEL JORDAN IN CHAOS IN THE WINDY CITY

More rubbish from someone tall with a ball – 'Magic' using his B-ball skills in a bog-standard platform adventure. Chaos!

5



DARIUS TWIN

Strangest celeb tie-in of them all – pop crooner Darius is nowhere to be found. And neither's his twin. Funny, that.

RETRO TAT

As if your pockets weren't full enough

Banpresto must have missed the alarm and overslept this month. After the inventive if painful Mario mouse, they're now half-heartedly serving up *more keyrings*. These ones offer thoroughly unremarkable pixel prints, with one saving grace – the box they come in also serves as a cool Question Mark savings bank. Just be careful to hide it when the plumber comes round, in case he sees it and bashes his hea... oh, you're way ahead of us.



WRITE IN!

Is there a Nintendo character that Banpresto have overlooked for inclusion in their range of 798 keyrings? Tell us and we'll name and shame it in these very pages. There's just no room for that level of negligence these days. Email ngc@futurenet.co.uk

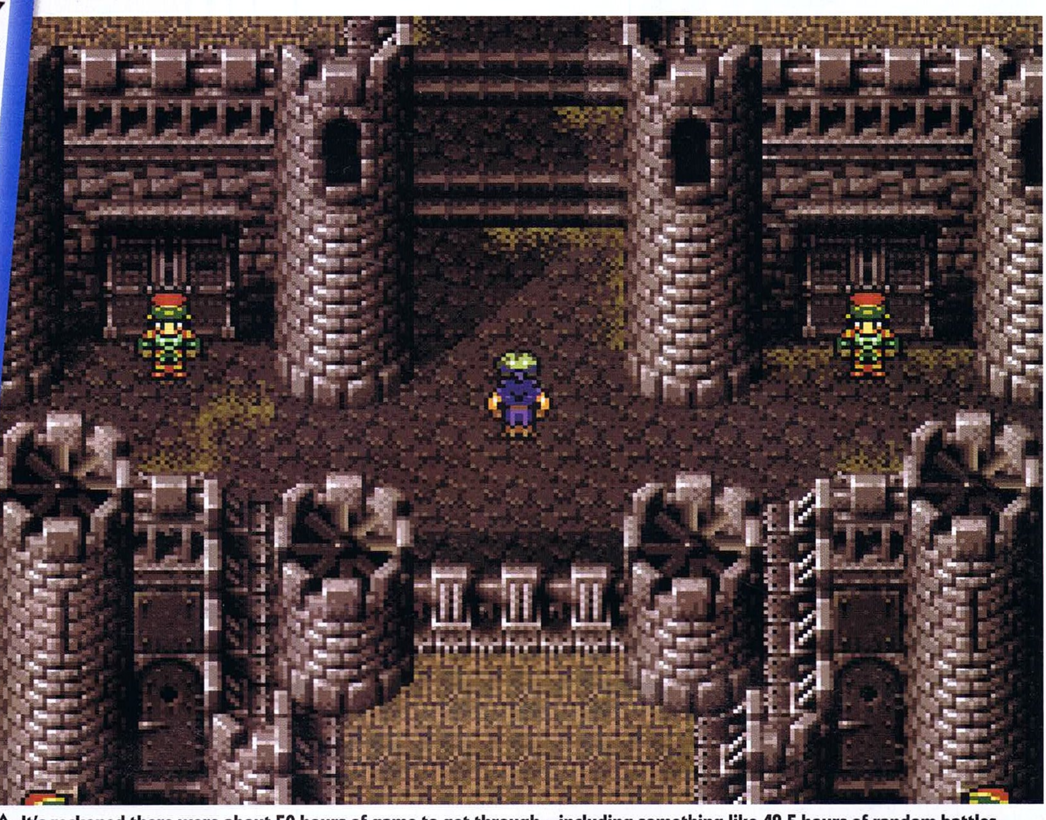
THIS MONTH IN NINTENDO

This month, twelve years ago – **Super Play, December 1994**





△ You began *FFIII* a prisoner, with no memory of your real identity.



△ It's reckoned there were about 50 hours of game to get through – including something like 49.5 hours of random battles.



GAME OF THE MONTH
FINAL FANTASY III
SUPER NINTENDO

Epic struggle for freedom against the Empire's Magitek. No Harry Potter here...

WHAT'S THIS? Actually the sixth in the *Final Fantasy* series, renamed and Englished-up for a Western audience that had only seen two *FF* games before. Epic with a capital EPIC.

THE BIG DEAL: Squaresoft had already earned the right to wear the bejewelled crown of RPG mastery, but with *FFIII* – all stunning artwork, bottomless plot and operatic cutscenes – they surpassed themselves. Mr Wil Overton, grabbing quick goes between slaving over another stellar Super Play cover, reckoned that (in-your-face translation and syrupy pace aside) it was "the best game I've played all year and easily the best console RPG ever." 95%!

FROM THE SAME TEAM AS: *Cruise Chaser Blassty* and *King's Knight Special*. Oh, and a few other *Final Fantasy* games.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? A colossal success in Japan, a cult hit in the US – never released in Europe, just like its later Square stablemate, *Super Mario RPG*. A year or so later, Square had got bored of squashing things onto Nintendo's fat carts and run off to be PlayStation's girlfriend instead.

AND: The censor's scissors snipped again – aspects of "playfulness" and "sexuality" in the original Japanese *FFVI* were left on the translation room floor.



△ Fights utilised 'Active Battle Time' – Square's strange 'live' turn-based system.

Everyone was playing...

STUNT RACE FX
SUPER NINTENDO



△ That's 3D, 1993-style. We also ate gruel for breakfast and supper.



△ Bumpy stunt races: source of much juddery polygon confusion.

***Stunt Race FX*'s 3D graphics were revolutionary at the time.** It topped the charts faster than we can say Glenn Medeiros.

Coded mainly by Brits – future *Pikmin* hero Colin Reed and Giles '*1080*' Goddard – *Stunt Race FX* came loaded with the power of *Starwing*'s Super FX chip, allowing it to fill your face with proper 3D buggies and tracks. Very nice it was too, with decent track design – including an aqua tunnel replete with wildlife, a water course with marine pipes and a sky ramp – and show-off Super FX work (such as fog fading after the first lap) married to gratifying shoulder-button skiddery and opponents as tough as a diamond in a flak jacket. *Stunt Race* knocked *Mortal Kombat II* off the top of the charts – but the N64 pseudo-sequel *Buggie Boogie* took a wrong turn in development hell and never emerged.

OTHER REVIEWS THIS MONTH

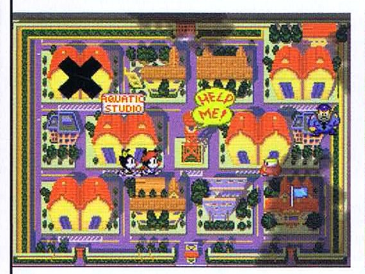
Lemmings 2
Over-complicated sequel to infuriating but blockbusting puzzler.
88%

Syndicate
Complex dystopian PC real-time strategy ably squashed onto SNES.
80%

Mickey Mania
Technically impressive and surprisingly enjoyable Disney platty.
87%

Worst game...

ANIMANIACS
SUPER NINTENDO





December '94 was a bumper month for top-notch Super Nintendo games, with only two games scoring below 75%. *Full Throttle Racing*, a motorcycle race that let you "park on the sea", was one. The other, *Animaniacs*, earned 28% as reward for being "a platform game so unfair it boggles the mind."

Handing you control of all three exhaustingly hyperactive stars of the popular '90s cartoon, it amounted to little more than a memory test, and wasn't helped by stuttering shadows and abstract perspectives that would give Picasso a long face. Coded by Konami, of all people. They're better now.

Other news...

Old news, tastefully repackaged



CAPCON

Capcom saw their US subsidiary tumble into the red, after Super Nintendo finally woke up to their tactic of churning out endless *Street Fighter II* tweaks. 1.65 million copies of *Super Street Fighter II* (the third version of the game) were left unwanted and unloved on shop shelves. 12 years later, we're on *SFII* edition 573.



SHOOT TO THRILL

Doom overlords iD Software confirmed a version of their groundbreaking shooter for the upcoming Nintendo 64 (or 'Ultra 64', as they insisted on calling it back then). But with big system hope *Cruis'n USA* attracting "sober descriptions" at a recent trade show, the 'Ultra 64' wasn't actually looking very ultra at all.



PRIDE BEFORE A CALL

The Nintendo Hotline – the phone game tips service that rescued people about to claw their own clothes off in frustration – prepared for its 1 millionth caller. The lucky phoner would win a T-shirt ("I was the millionth caller!") and their own height in games. Nintendo hoped it wouldn't be a professional stilt-walker.



Bring back the memories – or fill in the brainholes with new ones.

CLASSIC BOXART

DOUBLE DRAGON : NES (1988)

Time was when Technos *Double Dragon* was the essence of videogame cool. It might not be obvious from the boxart. Slap-happy twins Billy and Jimmy Lee were streetwise punks, but the artist apparently modelled them on 30-year-old company CEOs – and decided to let Jimmy's bicep have its own adventure. Meanwhile, down south, Jimmy's doing the Pinocchio – you can almost see the strings – while Billy's so angry we think a strand may have sprung loose from his brick of hair and spray. This is what the Nintendo Seal of Quality was made for.

CLASSIC CUTSCENE

SPACESTATION SILICON VALLEY : N64 (1999)

Silicon Valley's very British intro is probably best remembered for its brief love affair between a dog and a sheep – cruelly cut short by the mutt disappearing under several tons of spaceship. As for the ending – Evo hammers the eject button as the ship plummets, but isn't jettisoned until the craft's on safe ground, with comic timing that easily trounces a lifetime of Dick & Dom.









CLASSIC COCK-UP

MULTI-HAT MARIO : SUPER MARIO 64, NINTENDO 64 (1997)

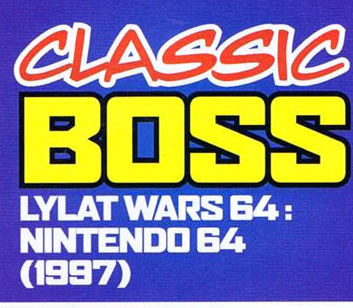
Caused much head-scratching this -- *Mario 64* was so practically perfect in each and every way that we wondered if it was an actual feature rather than a cockup. Mario could get his cap blown off by the super-annoying snowman in Snowman's Land, but if he then used one of the level's secret warps, the number of hats left lying on the ground would double, until you ended up with a cloth skyscraper of Mario headwear. Even better – if you tried to cover Mario's liquorice-hair up by grabbing the hats again, Mario would be left *holding* his cap, allowing you to go mental on Goombas with your millinery. Never before or since has the world of headwear been so amazing.

△ Mario versus the flowery mechanical doll things.

CAREER GRAPH: Cheep Cheep

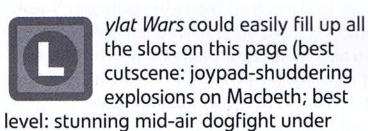
The bird that is actually a fish.

- **Super Mario Bros (1985):** Floats about a bit in the underwater levels. Is, basically, a fish.
- **Super Mario Bros 3 (1988):** Baby Cheep captures our hearts. Then kills us horribly.
- **Super Mario World (1990):** Fish out of water? Hardly – he's flying, and as deadly as ever.
- **Super Mario Kart (1992):** Having piled on the pounds, literally vomits out trophies.
- **Yoshi's Safari (1993):** Fish supper tonight as he's shot up by your Super Scope.
- **Super Mario RPG (1996):** Gifted with the immortal line: "Blub blub blub".
- **Super Mario 64 (1997):** Fish eats man as 'Boss Bass' swallows Mario whole.
- **Mario Kart 64 (1997):** As big as before, but in 3D for a real sense of scales.
- **Game & Watch Gallery 2 (1998):** Gobbles up drowning parachutists. Bad fish.
- **Yoshi's Story (1998):** Emerge from egg, get eaten by Yoshi, revert to egg.
- **Mario Party 3 (2000):** Cheep Cheep Chase blisters our fingers up real nice.
- **Paper Mario (2000):** Ally with power to transport Mario over water – for free!

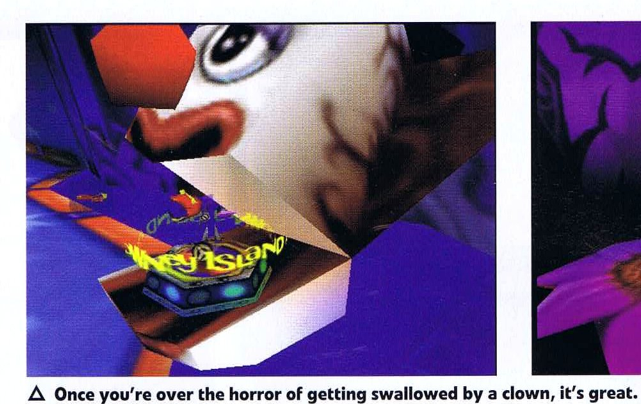








Lylat Wars could easily fill up all the slots on this page (best cutscene: joypad-shuddering explosions on Macbeth; best level: stunning mid-air dogfight under Katrina's alien mothership). But we've chosen to highlight the end boss, because – spoiler warning for those of you still living in 1997 – there were two of them. On the easy setting, Andross's screen-filling face burned angry at you. On hard, his true form – a disgusting floating electro-brain – was revealed. We made him dead and we liked it. A lot.



Once you're over the horror of getting swallowed by a clown, it's great.



CLASSIC LEVEL

ROCKET ROBOT ON WHEELS
NINTENDO 64 (1999)

With the office buried under *Mario 64* wannabes back in '99, we didn't have much hope for this dismal-looking Ubisoft platformer with an awful name coded by ex-Microsoft Word programmers. We were soon spooning humble pie into our hats and tucking in.

Rocket Robot on Wheels just felt *right* somehow; the starring robo-unicycle was smooth and responsive and the unique pick-things-up-and-bung-'em controls felt entirely natural after the first few goes. Like Shigsy's best work, *Rocket*'s opening level was a giant playground – literally and otherwise. The Word boys used the fairground setting to ram it full of things to do: beach buggy racing, a beehive mini-level and a short game of noughts-and-crosses with a robotic chicken. Common in America, apparently.

Best of all, an entire area was given over to building your own rollercoaster any way you liked it, and then *riding* the thing in first-person – a thrilling throwaway idea that managed to out-perform platformers like *Tonic frickin' Trouble* (not its actual name) in their entirety. *Rocket* just got better and better (level two had you throwing sheep at velcro columns in order to make a staircase), but that opening level was true platforming perfection. On wheels!



LOST CLASSIC

HOTEL MARIO : PHILIPS CDI (1994)

Seeing as some smartarses are already comparing the Revolution controller to the one that came with Philips short-lived CDi console (a glorified remote control), it's a good time to dig up the Mario game that time forgot. One of four exclusive Nintendo-themed games for the system (the others being best-forgotten *Legend of Zelda* interactive movies), *Hotel Mario* was a puzzle game with the thrilling theme of searching behind every single door in a hotel for Peach. Incidentally, the real Hotel Mario is in Madrid. The game bears little relation.

CAREER GRAPH

- **Mario Kart: Super Circuit (2001):** Fins are looking up: a track named after it.
- **Mario Party 4 (2002):** Stuck on the end of a fishing line – *where he belongs.*
- **Super Mario Sunshine (2002):** Acquire the power of fire. Just not funny anymore.
- **Mario and Luigi: Superstar Saga (2003):** Rapidly becoming a one-trick pony, this fish.
- **Mario Kart Double Dash (2003):** Back on Lakitu's fishing line. Knows its plaice.
- **Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour (2003):** Gets its own tournament. Called 'Cheep Cheep'.
- **Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures (2004):** A better cameo than Mario ever got.
- **Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door (2004):** Is literally a blimp.
- **Mario Party 6 (2004):** Finny fellas get title screen cameo if you bark their name.
- **Mario Pinball Land (2004):** Mum's a Cheep Cheep, dad's a pufferfish. Cod almighty.
- **Mario Party Advance (2005):** Refuses to let you win a race if you get too far ahead. What?
- **Dance Dance Revolution: Mario Mix (2005):** The fish gets soul to leap in time to tracks. Fin.

?

30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW

MAILBOX

EMAIL US!

Got something to say? Run out of stamps? Guards won't let you near a pen? Then log on to the interweb and 'get' us 'at'...

ngc@futurenet.co.uk

Include your name and address so we know who to credit the letter to. Do it! Do it! Do it now!

STAR LETTER

If you send us the best letter of the month, you'll receive a shiny new Gamecube (or GBA/DS) game from our bulging sack of shiny new games. Lovely.

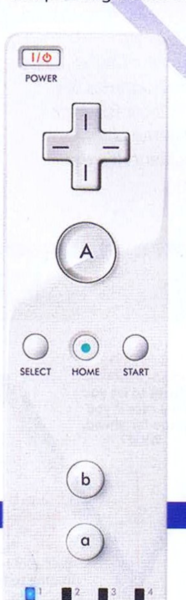
"Moan and whinge"

Gamers are such hypocritical beings. I remember a time, not so long ago, when people complained about the lack of new, fresh, interesting ideas in games. And when we finally get a fresh new injection of innovation, namely the DS and the newly unveiled Revolution controller, people have the cheek to moan and whinge even more! Within minutes, nay, seconds of details being released, people were moaning over the internet, "it looks horrible, why Nintendo why!? It's 4 teh kiddies!!1!1!"

Gamers want new ideas but at the same time they reject any change to the usual way of playing games. Why can't they have the maturity to wait and see what type of games the Revolution will bring? I, for one, reckon it looks really good fun. Watching that video, ideas flowed through my head about the possibilities the controller could bring – imagine using it to actually fight your opponents in *Soul Calibur* or *Super Smash Brothers*.

What's worse is that the people complaining about the controller are the same people that moaned about the DS. Then most of them probably bought or played a DS and got hooked, realising they were wrong. Sorry for the rant, but why can't people be more open minded?
Michael Bowen, via email

Like the DS, Revolution is one of those things most people will only appreciate when they get their hands on it. The console is still a very long way from completion, and the controller has additional functions that have yet to be revealed. Once some actual game footage is shown, maybe the cynics will re-evaluate their pessimistic opinion. Ed





Bonus Letters

Then you see that *Resident Evil 4* is nominated for best film based game of 2005 which just makes you break down and weep.
Daniel Baxendale, Cheshire
Eek! We'll have a word...Ed

Thank you for letting me have my say.
Steven Eckersall, Swindon
My pleasure. Ed

You want to pass it to get perfection.
Elliot Chris Bounds, Bognor Regis
So I've heard. Ed

Nintendo have been gaining steam.
David Yarrow, via email
But losing water. Ed

The anime character RokStar drew on his DS in NGC pocket was Rurouni Kenishin from the anime series Samurai X and Kenshin.
Daniel Vincent, via email
Blimey. Ed

It's not a game pad, it's a TV remote!
Tim Osborne, via email
You tell 'em. Ed

I was right! I suggested it could be like an actual thing you moved around.
Jamie Rakoczi, Bath
Spooky. Ed

"Not impressed"

I've just seen the Revolution's controller and the first three words that come to mind are "I'm not impressed." I suppose it is new and I suppose it is different but I can't see myself interacting with it in the same way I use the Gamecube controller. For starters it looks like a TV remote and, to me anyway, seems more complicated than the standard controllers we use today. Above all, it doesn't seem revolutionary – the only new thing I can see is that you can move it around and the game senses it. Like the DS's touch screen, it's a feature that might be used in games just because it's available.
Matthew Marwick, Balfron

Let the backlash commence. Ed

"Beyond ingenious"

I have to admit that I, a dedicated Nintendo fanboy, was rather dubious, even sceptical about how 'revolutionary' the Nintendo Revolution would be. When it was hinted that the DS had inspired the new controller, I was predicting a scaled-down touch screen controller that would only be used for maps and inventories. I thought: "that's it for me, I'll watch from the sidelines, I'll keep my Gamecube but I won't get involved with the Revolution, as it will only be underwhelming in the long run."

Well, if you'll pardon the profanities, [*cripes! snip!* **Ed**], that controller is beyond ingenious. There's no word for how mind-bogglingly ingenious it is. And yet, as with the DS, it's one of those ideas that's so bloody simple, I cannot believe that no one thought of it before.

And one-handed gaming? I was only thinking about that the other day. Thinking, now *there's* a revolution. This means I'll be able to beat my sister at multiplayer games while munching on a packet of crisps or a slice of pizza. I could even rest my DS on the table next to me and play both machines at once. Okay, perhaps that's enough nonsense but the point is that one-handed gaming is such a great yet simple idea that it could turn a lot of heads. Finally we'll be able to say to our friends, I beat Ganondorf one-handed!
James Batchelor, via email

You could even beat your sister at Smash Bros while teaching her Nintendog to breakdance. The technical term for this would be 'pwned'. Ed

HONOURABLE MENTIONS
Sam Rose, Carcolston; Gareth Martin, Milnthorpe; Tony Southion, London; Sam Packham, Derby; Joakim Olsen, Norway; Cez Rowland, via email; Jihad Hassania, Isleworth; James Cook, Birmingham; Tom Laverack, Crowthorne; Arthur Plant, Greenock; Mathew Williams, Swansea; Graham Matthews, Newcastle; Barney Williams, Bath; Liam Whiting, Oldham; Gilles Reuse, Belgium; Almar Ruisch, Netherlands; Sam Young, via email; Robert Thompson, via email; David Smith, via email; Philip Clarke, Mullaghbawn; Sean Chriscole, Orrell; Dan McLaren, Stockport; Tom Trott, Brighton; Ingvar Gausden, via email; Jonathan Humphreys, via email; Jonathan Barron, via email;

"Gone for it"

I've had a tendency to feel pretty cynical about Nintendo of late, but I have to admit this new Revolution controller they've just unveiled has really got me excited. Firstly, I'm so glad they didn't just bung a touch screen on a Wavebird and call it revolutionary – they've really gone for it with this 3D-mouse-like-pointer-thing (as I've coined it). Imagine using the controller in first-person shooters to aim and shoot – it would be so much more intuitive than the unwieldy dual-analogue set up we have with today's controllers. Then, how about swinging the controller around as a sword in *Zelda*, so you're actually slicing your enemies apart as they appear on the screen? And I'm sure Nintendo has great ideas for *Mario 128* – hopefully this will be a flagship title which really shows what can be done with the controller's unique features, like *Mario 64* did for the N64. I do have one worry though – after waving this controller around for hours at a time, isn't your arm going to get bloody tired?
Tom Laverack, Crowthorne

You don't actually have to hold the controller at arm's length. You can rest it in your lap like you would a normal controller, and just wiggle your wrist. Ed

"No way"

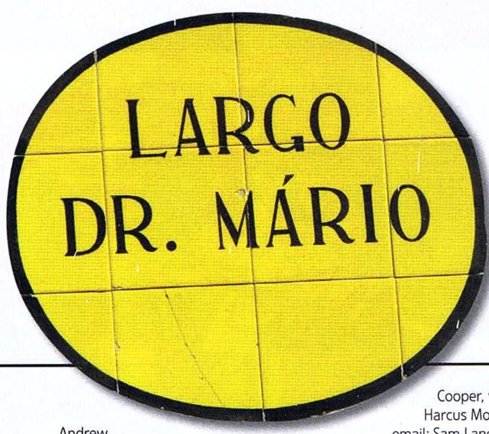
Nintendo has just succeeded in scaring off the majority of gamers. There's no way on earth that this is going to entice Xbox and PS2 owners. No matter how great the Revolution controller may actually be, people will be unwilling to change to something so unusual. We Nintendo fans may see this controller as genius, but what's the use in having revolutionary ideas if they run out of money to implement them because the next console fails?
Ben Dormand, Sidmouth

DS is also pretty unusual but it's by far the bestselling handheld system in Japan. Ed

"Street"

Look at this picture that I took on my vacation in Portugal. It's just an ordinary street in a small village. Has Shigsy ever been in Portugal?
Sebastiaan Van Severen, Belgium

To get there, did you have to take a detour along Tetris Boulevard? Ed



Bonus Letters

I was simply blown away by the Revolution controller.
Daniel Scott, Perth
Join the club. Ed

Icky is a poo.
Alexander Davies, Llandeilo
So long, gay Bowser. Ed

I'd have Twilight Princess while dressed in a pink Tingle costume rubbing my Master Sword.
Tom Ryan Chambers, Pontefract
Police! Ed

I drank some more Duvels and started drawing again. I also made a naked Enjiki.
Emlyn Wouters, Belgium
Sadly unprintable in a family magazine. Ed

I've just seen James Ashton on Gamer TV on Bravo, I thought someone had disposed of him back in 1998.
Dave McAuslene, via email
Me too. Ed



Butch men screamed like girls.
Dan Entwistle, via email
I hate it when that happens. Ed

Something like Game N or N5 is what you're looking for.
Jack Taylor, Driffield
NGC almost got called Game N, until somebody tried saying it out loud. Ed



△ **To pee or not to pee, that is – as always – the question…**

"Poopzor"

I was reading issue 111's Timewarp snippet on the five best ever toilets to feature in videogames and I thought, they're all pretty good, but what about that great one in *Banjo-Kazooie*? So, I dug out my old copy of *Banjo-Kazooie*, found my way to the Mad Monster Mansion level, hopped through the rooftop window, and there you have the best videogame toilet ever. How could you forget Poopzor, Lord of all Toilets (okay, I may have made the name up)?
Ross Fuller Clevedon

If I remember correctly, his real name is Loggo. Ed

"Actual smells"

I was observing one of the trailers for *Twilight Princess* the other day, and when it came to the part where Link looks round an underground area and everything changes (ghosts), it clicked. See that yellow wobbly line in the air? That, dear friends, is a smell. Link is a werewolf, so using his advanced senses of smell he can 'see' smells as shapes in the air – different colours and opacities will probably denote smells for different things. So my guess is that the 'hook' this time is smell and the use thereof. Expect at least one smell-related dungeon. Yummy. Maybe the game will expel actual smells from the grilles in the sides of the Gamecube. Having seen the Revolution controller, you never know.
Chris Bowman, Edinburgh

Well spotted. I reckon you've sniffed out the truth. Ed

CORRECTION CORNER

Dear Doctor, do you see anything wrong with this passage in issue 110 of NGC mag? I do. Now correct me if I'm wrong but this creature you describe is definitely not the final boss in *Timesplitters: Future Perfect*.
1. The final boss doesn't throw fireballs.
2. It doesn't have claws.
3. It has two eyes which don't open and shut, and it does absolutely nothing if you shoot it in the eyes. You defeat it by shooting the circled areas (the guns/hands) until it starts to glow/flash and slow down considerably, at which point you deliver hot lead up its rear end. You keep repeating that until it dies.
Anon, via email

For this reason we have retired the senile old Dr Kitts. Ed

Dr Kitts,
How do you defeat the final boss in *Timesplitters: Future Perfect*?
Luke Parsons, Durham

Dr Kitts decides that now is not the time for mass murder, he could get in trouble.
The final boss of Timesplitters: Future Perfect isn't too hard to defeat, and there are rumours of a glitch you can exploit. Firstly, the creature has two attacks: his claws and throwing fireballs. Strafe from side to side and don't stay in the same place. Wait for its eye to open and shoot it. It will take four or five shots to defeat. The supposed glitch is that if you get incredibly close to the creature, its claws won't hurt you. But it's a tough one, and we couldn't get it working.

Andrew Connelly, via email; David Condon, via email; Tom Cooper, via email; Harcus Moodie, via email; Sam Lane, Bristol; Cameron Osbon, via email; Jake Wort, Walton-on-Thames; Tom Dillow, via email; E Baker, via email; Alexander Davies, Llandeilo; Luke Ingle, Huntingdon; Jade Everett, Kingsdown; David Yarrow, Chipping Norton; Michael Freeman, Herne Bay; Harry Read, via email; Alice Young, via email. Ta!

MAILBOX

"It's called Autumn, you idiots, Autumn"

"Text-based"

I recently found the text-based game of *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* was available to play online so I thought I would try it out, not knowing what to expect from such a basic sort of game. I then played it as much as I could until I had completed it, by which time I had reached an important conclusion – text is a great format for a computer game.

In a modern game, you know what your character can do (kick, punch, use item) and you can easily see which action gets you past that door/saves you from certain destruction. Text-based games can have literally any solution – you can type anything that comes into your head. They make you rely on your own intelligence and give you much more freedom.

I then started thinking about how this could possibly work today. I'm sure they would be popular if enough people would play them in the first place, but most people these days would probably think a game composed entirely of text sounded unexciting. Then it hit me – the DS would be the perfect format for these sorts of games. The touch screen could have a keyboard to enter actions and the top screen could describe what is happening. The top screen could also show animations of your character trying the actions you enter. This would give the game a visual element and could be what is necessary to make it appealing to people today. This proves two things. The first is that if something is considered dated it doesn't necessarily mean it is inferior. The second is that old games can be brilliant. How likely is it that there will be a DS game like this? While we wait to see if it will happen, I would advise anyone to try and find the *Hitchhiker's Guide* one online (available on several websites).

Matthew Scott, Heathfield

The problem with text adventures is their unavoidably limited vocabulary – you might think you know the solution to a puzzle but unless you can guess the exact phrasing the game is expecting, you'll get a dumb 'I don't understand' response. When graphics became advanced enough, the text adventure was ousted in favour of the point-and-click alternative, and we've already seen an excellent example of that variety on DS in the form of* Another Code. *Ed

"Open button"

I was becoming very irritated by the Open button on my Gamecube being jammed *again* so in a fit of desperation I asked my dad if he could try and fix it. Little did I know that his idea of fixing the button involved spraying furniture polish on it. A lot of shouting and a thrown handset later, I was left without a Gamecube. After muttering a bit more abuse, I plugged in my N64 and happily set off playing *Banjo-Tooie*, which made me think how amazing Revolution will be if you can download N64 games onto it – then we can play all the classic games without having 20 different cables tangled together.

I now have my third Gamecube and I'm wondering if you have any advice to stop that button sticking down? I've lost two Gamecubes to that button and my parents refuse to buy me another so I really need to make sure it doesn't happen to this one, thanks.

Jonathon Barlow, Wrexham

You must be really rough with that button – I know it can be a bit dodgy, but to knacker two Gamecubes… If it breaks again, remember your two-year guarantee will be null and void if you fill the console with household cleaning products. Ed

"Endure living"

Animal Crossing is beautiful, and only spoilt by those damned Americanisms creeping in almost every time you speak to someone, not to mention many American-based celebrations. And why should I have to endure living in 'fall' in *Harvest Moon* and *Animal Crossing*? It is unbelievably annoying. Come on, translators – it's called autumn, you idiots, autumn! Why can't translators just pay more attention to these things? I don't want British-specific events in games, just more care.

Luke Bowyer, Cheshire

After they've translated from Japanese to US English to French, German and Spanish, they're probably too worn out to cater for proper Queen's English. At least with the next* Animal Crossing *on DS there will be no more US holidays. Ed

"Harman"

As a trainee forensic psychologist I would like to say *Killer 7* may have got it terribly wrong. Harman is supposed to be suffering dissociated identity disorder but I would argue against this diagnosis. It seems more plausible that the symptoms describe acute paranoid schizophrenia. He



CREATIVE

This month's top arts and crafts masterpieces…

"Costume"

Here is my homemade Link costume. I made almost every part of it – tunic, hat, gloves, even the shield. I bought the boots, and the sword is actually Aragorn's sword from the *Lord Of The Rings* movies. I also made a drawing of Link. My next project will be a Zelda costume.

Kim Li, Norway

Are those your real ears? Ed

"Sporting"

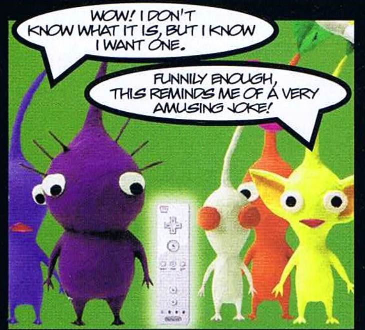
This just sprung out of a chat with some friends, which eventually turned to the massive influx of Mario-themed sporting games. One of them suggested, just short of Super Mario Polo (with Yoshis as steeds), Super Mario Cross Country. Anyway, enjoy!

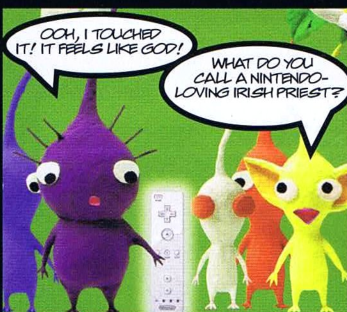
Craig Fotheringham, Australia

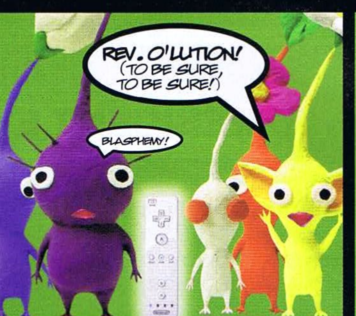
It's only a matter of time… Ed

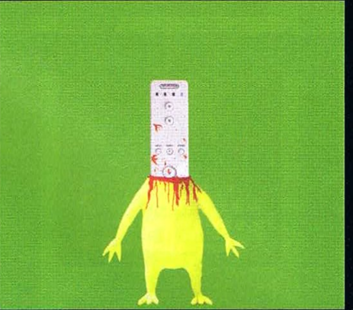
GriNtendo!

SEND US YOUR NINTENDO JOKES! MAKE THEM GOOD AND YOU WIN A GAME. MAKE THEM CRAP AND THE YELLOW PIKMIN DIES. HORRIBLY. AND IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.
THIS MONTH: JOKE SUPPLIED BY SOME WELSH BLOKE.









WRITE TO... GRINTENDO, MAILBOX, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK

has delusions of persecution from these 'heavens smiles' and delusions of grandeur in thinking himself the ringleader of a squad of assassins. I suspect he has had latent schizophrenic traits all his life; however the trigger is most likely to have been related to being wheelchair-bound. The nurse figure is key to Harman's condition; I would surmise they were actually personally involved and that she cared for him at home. Being unable to walk would have put pressure on this nurse, having to be carer and sole form of social contact when Harman was frustrated. This situation could quite easily have polarised their relationship and may even have led to bouts of abuse. Under this type of stress it is probable that Harman's schizophrenic tendencies surfaced as overt symptoms.

Harman may have managed this stress through manifesting delusions of persecution and visual hallucinations (the Killer 7). The Killer 7 represent a way through which Harman can cope with the stresses in his life. I doubt that he actually has seven dissociated identities, but rather identifies with his hallucinations to the point that he believes them to be intrinsically related to himself rather than actually him. This would explain how the Killer 7 are able to be killed and brought back to life, since the destruction of dissociated identities would be catastrophic to the central psyche. Harman's cognitive distortions could be successfully challenged with cognitive-behavioural therapy, especially since his paraplegia is at odds with many of the other 'identities' capabilities. Being paraplegic reduces the danger posed by Harman. However, he still remains a high risk to the public at large, thinking them to be 'heavens smiles'.

Russell Norton, Somerton

***Does this mean it's wrong to accept sweets from him outside the school gates?* Ed**

"Inadequate"

I've got one problem with issue 111's top 20 hardest moments feature. I've never played *Battletoads* but I find it quite difficult to believe that any game ever created could be harder than *Ikaruga*. I've played it tons, completing the first level with a chain of 70-something, but I'm still pitifully inadequate and have never come close to even surviving level 4, let alone sustaining a chain for any length of time. Put it this way – I've never felt like a game actually laughs at me before and even though I love the soundtrack, whenever I hear it I feel a void between me and the sound because I'm so far away from conquering the game. Is *Battletoads* really harder than this?

Tom Arnold, via email

***Oh yes.* Battletoads *flushes* Ikaruga*'s head down the toilet and steals its lunch money on a daily basis.* Ed**



△ **A typical example of a 'casual' game, according to our local *Battletoads* expert. Only novices play this sort of thing.**

SO TELL ME THIS...

Your questions fudged by the NGC pocket calculator.

1. Other than Animal Crossing *and* Mario Kart*, are there any other DS games with online multiplayer?*
2. Will there be a fee for playing with DS online?
3. Do European and American GBA games work together, as I'm thinking of importing Pokémon Emerald*?*
4. Is there any way I could get the cool NGC bag you offered a while ago for UK subscribers?

Saana Kaurala, Finland

1.* Tony Hawk's American Wasteland, *for starters.
2. Reggie said it would be free of charge, and we're happy to take his word on that (or anything else).
3. They sometimes work, but the only way to be sure is to buy all your games from the same region.
4. Sadly they're all gone. If we ever make any more, we'll let you know.

1. If you hate Diddy Kong so much, why was his ugly, hateful mug on the front cover of issue 99?
2. Where the hell did the Phantasy Forum go? It was one of my favourite parts of the magazine, so please resurrect it. And don't try and worm your way out of it with sarcastic remarks, or I shall personally ensure that your arses are kicked and your names are taken.

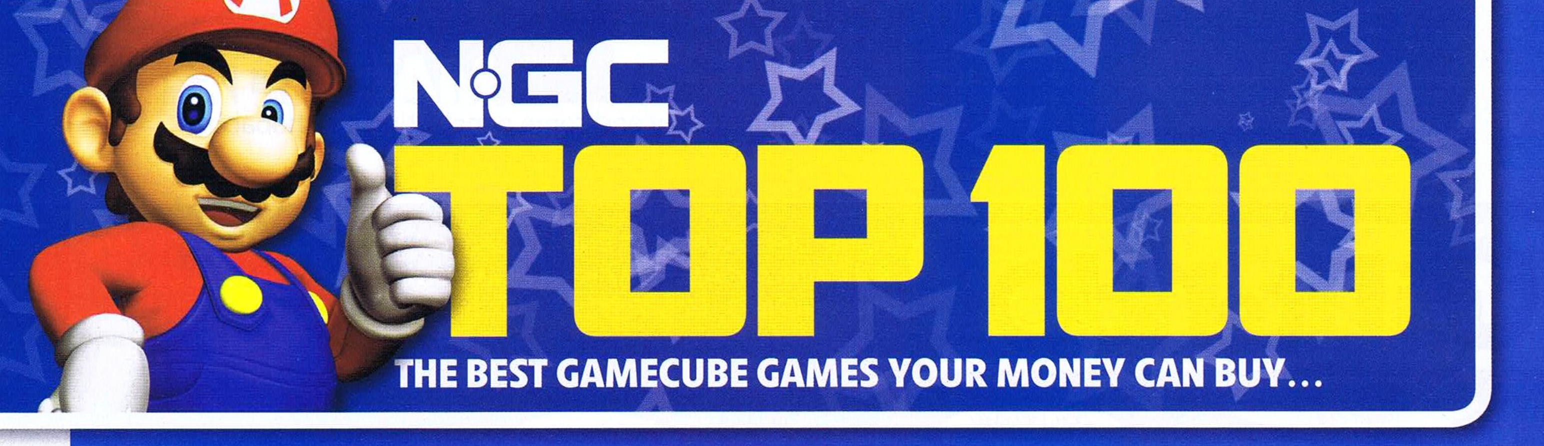
Sam Rowett, via email

1. Same reason Gex was on the cover of issue 17.
2. We dropped it when people stopped playing* Phantasy Star Online *in any appreciable numbers.

There's something that's really been bugging me abut the DS. If it isn't supposed to be the follow-up to the GBA, why are the sequels to GBA games like Mario & Luigi *going onto the DS and not onto the supposedly yet-to-be-created new Game Boy that will never exist?*

Kyle Marsh

Probably because DS is here and the next Game Boy may be years away.



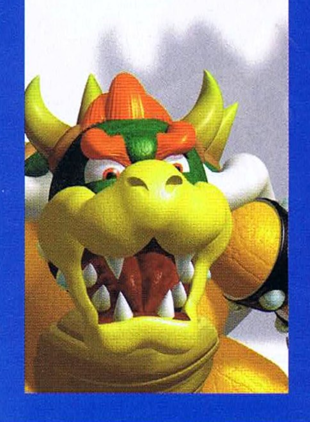




Your up-to-date guide to the hottest PAL titles.

Games aren't cheap. Even when you buy pre-owned games, it's still a bit gutting to get your bargain treasure home and find you've splashed out on a box of gaming garbage. Hence this buyer's guide – it's got:

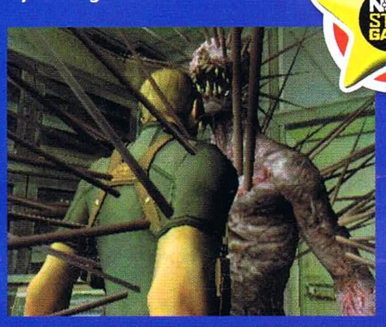
- **Our 100 top-scoring games, listed in score order so you can begin with the very best.**
- **Details of which issue it was reviewed in, so if you want to know more you can look through your back issues. You *do* have them, don't you…?**
- **A brief description of each game, so if you don't have the relevant back issue, you can still find out the most important things about it.**
- **Highlighted games, which go into a little more detail. As the list gets updated, the highlights will change.**

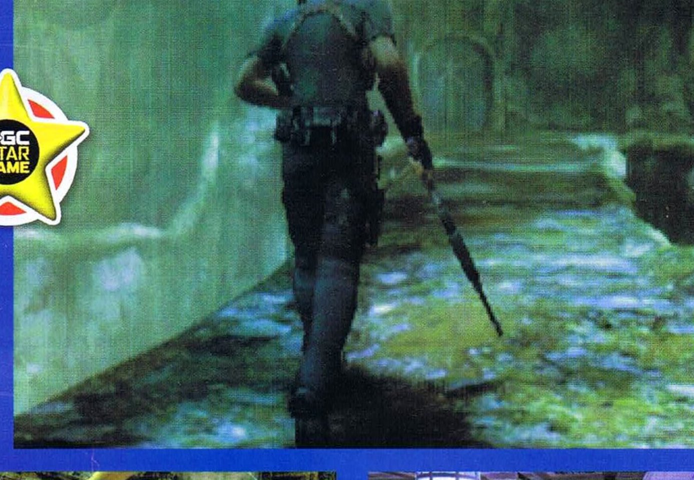


1 RESIDENT EVIL 4 — 97

CAPCOM ■ NGC/104

What, no zombies? What's going on? Something spectacular, that's what. This instalment takes the *Resi* series to the next level, with an unprecedented level of innovation. Gone are the three-day-long animations of doors opening, replaced by this new, far more dynamic game.











2 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/81

The babbling of the internet whingers faded to a stunned silence when this hit the shelves. It's as exquisitely fashioned as a Pixar flick and doesn't lose any of the gameplay for it. Some sailing sections spoil it a bit, but this is as close to art as games have got.







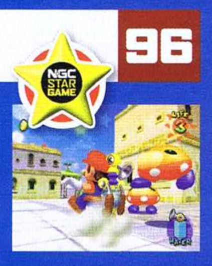
3 METROID PRIME — 97

NINTENDO ■ NGC/76

Looks absolutely incredible and there's no slow down, despite the huge, incredibly detailed environments. The action is varied and the puzzles are mind-bending. One of the finest games you'll ever play.



4 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE 96



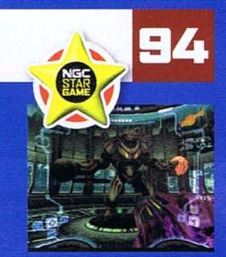


NINTENDO ■ NGC/73

Yet again Mario shows other platform 'heroes' how it's really done – in stunning 3D, with responsive controls and an engaging story about vandalism and poisonous brown slime. Plus a giant water-filled squirty backpack. It's everything you never knew you always wanted.



5 METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES 94



NINTENDO ■ NGC/101

Another outstanding outing for Samus Aran as she switches between dimensions to save the Luminoth from the Ing. The story is enriched by the logs you find, and Samus has useful new weapons and abilities. The landscapes aren't as varied and awe-inspiring as *Prime's*, but that's our only complaint.



6 MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!! 93



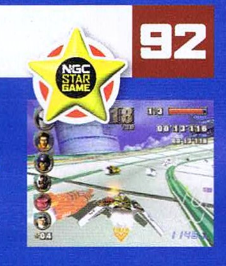


NINTENDO ■ NGC/88

Crazy courses littered with Chain Chomps and pick-up boxes, ludicrous weapons from slippery bananas to green shells, and all your favourite Ninty faces doubling up to race recklessly. The AI's a bit cheaty (a shell *just* as we're about to win? Hmm…) but it's a whole lot of fun.



7 F-ZERO GX 92



NINTENDO ■ NGC/85

This is a blisteringly fast racer that manages to keep up the pace without getting framerate jitters. You will never accept glitchy graphics again. A few more tracks would have been nice, but with editable vehicles (in addition to the 30+ that come with the game) and a Story mode, why complain?



8 PIKMIN 2 92





NINTENDO ■ NGC/99

Louie, Olimar's assistant, has shown himself to be less than efficient at managing the business. Happily, it means they've had to return to Earth for a longer session of collecting treasure, along with two new types of Pikmin to help them. Bigger, better and even more enjoyable than the original.



9 SOUL CALIBUR 2 91



NAMCO ■ NGC/85

Excellent, fast-paced fighting. Weapon Master mode is your key to unlocking the eight hidden characters, but the real star of the show isn't hidden. Namco has dropped in Link for the Gamecube version, complete with bow and arrow. It's the best fighting game on *any* system.

10 TIMESPLITTERS 2 91

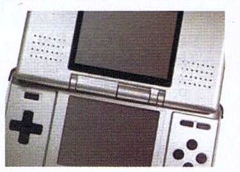




EIDOS ■ NGC/73

Travel back through time on the trail of the nefarious 'splitters. This means shooting things. A lot. Your weapons are time-zone appropriate, letting you wage war everywhere from the Wild West to the near future. The multiplayer is the icing on the cake. You will love every second of this.

TOP TEN GBA GAMES



1 ADVANCE WARS 1 & 2

Cute-looking turn-based strategy with a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging core. Honestly, it's better than it sounds. *AW2* is essentially *Advance Wars 1.5*, but it's tweaked to perfection.



2 WARIO WARE TWISTED!

Takes the template laid down by *Wario Ware*, then adds a tilt-sensitive cartridge. You'll play it until you're sick.



3 WARIO WARE

Imagine the simple graphics and gameplay of Game & Watch fired at you in five-second bursts. Loopy fun that you'll keep coming back to.

4 MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA

An RPG with puzzle and platform elements, starring our two top plumbers.



5 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

One of the most memorable outings for Link (alongside *Ocarina of Time*). Comes with bonus *Four Swords* multiplayer adventure.



6 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2

This tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest level design ever.



7 POKÉMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE

The same structure as before – catch 'em all and send 'em into battle – but still the most entertaining RPG out there.



8 MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT

Nabs the best bits from the SNES and N64 versions and if you've got four friends, GBAs and cables, they can play too.



9 METROID FUSION/ ZERO MISSION

Everything that has ever made *Metroid* great can be found in these two games: a sprawling environment littered with enemies and an imposing level of difficulty.



10 HARVEST MOON

A slow burner, *HM: Friends of Mineral Town* is a farming/charming sim to die for. It will last for months.

DIRECTORY

The best Gamecube games around

11 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE — 91

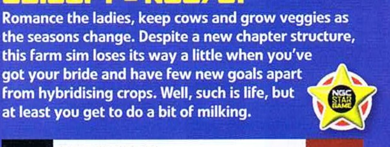
NINTENDO ■ NGC/68

All your Nintendo favourites get together for a phenomenal ruck across a whole range of game worlds. Think Samus could beat Mario? Or that three Jigglypuffs are better than one Link? You'll have ludicrous amounts of fun proving it, by yourself or with friends.



12 HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE — 91

UBISOFT ■ NGC/91



Romance the ladies, keep cows and grow veggies as the seasons change. Despite a new chapter structure, this farm sim loses its way a little when you've got your bride and have few new goals apart from hybridising crops. Well, such is life, but at least you get to do a bit of milking.



13 HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN — 91

EIDOS ■ NGC/82

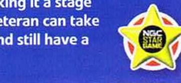
Bald, barcoded assassin 47 comes out of retirement and takes on the bad guys with a range of weapons. Not bad for a bloke who spends his time in a shed. You're rewarded for doing things quietly, but how you go about it is up to you. This is freeform gaming at its finest.



14 MARIO POWER TENNIS — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/104

If you stick with it and learn the ins and outs of the power shots, you're left with an incredibly tactical game. It levels the field, making it a stage where the most seasoned veteran can take on the most casual gamer and still have a closely fought match.



15 PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME — 91





UBISOFT ■ NGC/90

Ubisoft shows other developers how to update classic games without ruining them, as the brilliant 2D platformer gets transformed into an outstanding 3D platformer. Maybe there's too much fighting, and maybe the puzzles are samey, but overall it reeks of quality.



16 PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND-YEAR DOOR — 91

NINTENDO ■ NGC/100

With Mario's papery ability to fold himself into a paper plane or turn sideways to become nigh-invisible, plus a great fighting mechanism and rippable scenery, this is a brilliant example of Nintendo doing what it does best – creating unique games.

17 WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM — 90







NINTENDO ■ NGC/67

A few tiny framerate problems hamper the PAL version of this aquatic racer, but it is still a fabulous game. It's convincingly speedy and looks wonderful – the water effects will leave you staggered. The controls are intuitive and effective. In short, this is absolute magic.



18 VIEWTIFUL JOE — 90

CAPCOM ■ NGC/84

Some people love the unusual look, some people hate it. Either way, get past the cel-shading and this 2D-yet-3D beat-'em-up impresses. Elements like speeding up and slowing down time during battles only add to the feel. It can be frustrating, but it'll win you over anyway.

19 SECOND SIGHT — 90

CODEMASTERS ■ NGC/97

Excellent psychic stealth-'em-up. Who are you? Why are you here? All will be revealed – if you survive. The levels are tightly designed, offering scope for replay, while its distinctive style and original touches make it one of the most memorable games we've played in years.

20 METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES — 90

KONAMI ■ NGC/91

This is a superb stealth/action adventure with a healthy pedigree. A great story combined with revamped graphics make this old Playstation title blossom on Gamecube. The voice acting and music are superb. There are some problems: the long cutscenes, it only takes a day to complete and there are too many bosses. We're just picky, though, this is a really, really good game.

21 BURNOUT 2 — 90

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/80

The best realistic racer on Gamecube. It looks great and it's wonderfully fast. But then, there's the crashing. After you've had fun roaring around the streets, you can beat up your car in the most spectacular manner possible. Accessible and entertaining.

22 WARIO WARE INC: MEGA PARTY GAME$ — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/97

A quickfire succession of hilarious five-second minigames are blasted at you and up to three friends. With tasks like nose picking, cat poking and banana peeling, it's original, outlandishly quirky and very good fun. This comes thoroughly recommended, but not by cats.



23 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE 1 & 2 — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/78

This online RPG will devour huge chunks of your life. Get ready for lots of menu screens, numbers and bashing crates. Note: 1) you'll need a broadband adaptor to play online – good luck finding one. 2) Third-party memory cards are prone to corrupt with this.



24 1080° AVALANCHE — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/89

More of a racer than a trick-based snowboarder, although jumps, spins and flips are all there. Short courses and a fair bit of pace keep things feeling tight. The time trial modes are the best bits – Gate Trial will have you trying to shave seconds off for months.

TOP FIVE PLATFORM GAMES

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
This is a tour-de-force of everything that good gaming should be. An absolute delight.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME
An innovative time-rewinding twist and excellent puzzles make this essential.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN
Good looking with trickier puzzles and, ahem, more 'mature' content.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Luigi buys a mansion and finds it's haunted. It's a little easy, but you'll enjoy every second.

DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT
Simply put, it's bongo brilliance.

TOP FIVE RACING GAMES



MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!
Single-player mode looks as cute as ever, but it's rock hard.

F-ZERO GX
Expertly crafted arcade fun that rockets along.

WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM
Classic Nintendo action with dazzling water effects.

BURNOUT 2
Fast car racing combined with steel-crunching pile-ups.

EXTREME G 3
The weapons are what make this future racer shine.

25 NBA STREET V3 — 90

EA ■ NGC/104

Think *Space Jam* meets *NBA Jam* meets EA's *NBA Street* and you're pretty much there. For the Gamecube incarnation, EA heaped in a load of Nintendo characters. This is entertaining arcade basketball with all the quirks of Nintendo. What more do you need?



26 ANIMAL CROSSING — 90

NINTENDO ■ NGC/98

Ever fancied leaving home and living in a town populated by animals? The full cartoon farming experience can now be yours, complete with N64 graphics and strange noises. Somehow, improving your house, filling the museum and getting a life prove very addictive.



27 SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/81

Vast boat-based RPG ported from the Dreamcast. "It'll change your life," our RPG fanatic assures us. The black holes in the universe of your quest for missing moonstones are stuffed with the usual RPG battling, puzzle solving and shopping, although it looks a bit dated now.



28 CONFLICT: DESERT STORM 2 — 90

SCI ■ NGC/86

Set during the first Gulf War, this team-based shooter is better than the original *Conflict: Desert Storm*. There's a completely new aspect to this one – you're not allowed to let any of your men die, which leads to all sorts of heroics when you try to save your team.



29 WORMS 3D — 90

SEGA ■ NGC/87

You know the score. You have four worms which must kill other worms. The special weapons are still crazy (sheep, the Holy Hand Grenade), but the real difference is that it's now in 3D, which affects your strategies to make for a better worm slaughtering experience.

30 ETERNAL DARKNESS — 89



NINTENDO ■ NGC/74

A Lovecraftian horror that sees you playing as a dozen different characters to fight off a dark, shambling evil. As you see more, your sanity meter falls, and when that drops to the bottom… This is a survival horror that spans twenty centuries of history. It's not another *Resi* clone; there's more to it than that. There are a few weaknesses in the combat, but other than that it's very nearly perfect.

31 LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS — 89

NINTENDO ■ NGC/102

This is an obscure *Zelda* game that's pretty hard on the pockets – in multiplayer mode, each of the four players needs a GBA and link cable. Nonetheless, it's great fun, very amusing and would have scored more highly if the best bit of the Japanese version – *Tetra's Trackers* – had been included.

32 RESIDENT EVIL 89

CAPCOM ■ NGC/72
Compelling survival horror. Play as Jill if you want to take things gently, Chris if you're feeling hardcore, then immerse yourself in this puzzle-solving, zombie-battling frightfest. There's a bit of backtracking and the puzzles are a tad annoying, but they don't hamper it too much.

33 SPLINTER CELL 89

UBISOFT ■ NGC/81
Only Sam Fisher and his various high-tech gadgets – like sticky bombs and camera disruptors – stand between terrorists and the Free World. It's the usual stealth-'em-up stuff, but done with a fair degree of flair and polish, although the 'three alarms and you're out' rule can become annoying.

34 CONFLICT: DESERT STORM 89

SCI ■ NGC/80
This is a rare breed: a multi-platform release that is about as far from the 'lazy port' title as you could possibly hope. This version has been fully optimised for the Gamecube. *Conflict: Desert Storm* is great fun and intensely tactical. The multiplayer is cracking good fun as well.

35 SSX 3 89

EA ■ NGC/87
Snowboard around one giant mountain, entering races or showing off tricks. Complete all three peaks and you'll get the chance to spend 15-30 minutes tricking your way down to the bottom. The framerate can be glitchy, and it's not quite as free-roaming as it initially seems, but it's a superb game.

36 DONKEY KONGA 88

NINTENDO ■ NGC/99
Drum along to a soundtrack, following the symbols on-screen for left bongo, right bongo, both bongos or clap. It's the sort of game that almost anyone can pick up and play. It's also completely addictive and tremendous fun. Despite the extra bongos costing £20 a set, the multiplayer makes it worthwhile.

37 PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN 88

UBISOFT ■ NGC/102
The Prince is older and his game's got more 'mature' (so, scantily-clad ladies and smart-arsed comments have been dropped in). It's still great to look at and great to play, with trickier puzzles than the first game, and although the fighting is a bit dodgy, the rest of it more than outweighs that problem.

38 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005 88

EA ■ NGC/98
This is a big game. You'll probably find lost tribes in there if you play for long enough, though you won't see them if you have other interests like, you know, a job or a life. More ball control, famous opponents, the ability to create your own golfer, 14 courses (11 of them new)… You can't get bigger or better than this.

39 LUIGI'S MANSION 88

NINTENDO ■ NGC/67
The most annoying thing about Luigi's own adventure is that it's too darn short. Apart from that, his escapades in the newly-acquired haunted house play like a combination of *Super Mario World* and *Ghostbusters*. The little man in the green hat has done himself proud with this one.

40 SUPER MONKEY BALL 88

SEGA ■ NGC/67
The first ingenious update of the old classic *Marble Madness* sticks monkeys in balls and rolls them around bizarre landscapes, collecting bananas. Minigames include obvious ball games like pool and golf, oddities like a tilting boxing ring and even a monkey version of *Mario Kart*.

TOP FIVE FIGHTING GAMES



SOUL CALIBUR 2
Gorgeous Link-fuelled beat-'em-up from Namco.

SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE
All your favourite Ninty types, pounding each other's faces in: just what we've always wanted!

VIEWTIFUL JOE
Absolutely spectacular 2D-yet-not-2D side-scrolling single player fighter.

DEF JAM VENDETTA
The wrestling game that appeals to non-grapple fans as well.

VIEWTIFUL JOE 2
There's more of the same inventive gameplay, without any substantial changes to the successful formula.

TOP FIVE SHOOTING GAMES



METROID PRIME
Tough as nails shooting-heavy sci-fi adventure.

METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES
Samus Aran takes on the deadly Ing in this solid sequel.

TIMESPLITTERS 2
Classy first-person shooting from the *GoldenEye* boys.

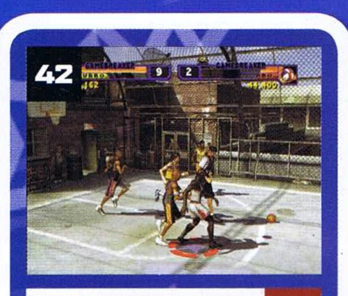
TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT
A great update, though not the revolution that was promised.

STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER
Looks great and the ropy on-foot sections of the sequel are no more.

41 TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT 88

EA ■ NGC/105
This wasn't the revolution that was promised. Instead it was just given a bit of a spring clean and a rethink. It's packed with juicy extras and the Story mode is a lot more cohesive as a single-player game. However, the trademark humour is in place and the multiplayer's still explosively good fun.

42



NBA STREET V2 88

EA ■ NGC/84
This is basketball fitted with EA's successful *Street* template. You simply don't need a serious basketball sim in your collection – this one is stacks of fun, and unless those real-life stats are absolutely vital to your enjoyment of a game, *NBA Street* has got everything you need. Three-on-three action, stunt combos and special moves – all this is crammed into an incredibly fun, fast-moving game.

43 DONKEY KONGA 2 88

NINTENDO ■ NGC/108
A second chance to get tendonitis. The songs may be cover versions, the menus may be pretty poor and there aren't enough minigames, but this is more of the same bongo and beats action that we all loved the first time around. Just don't play Solo mode in a crowded room: you'll look like a moron.

44 NHL 2006 88

EA ■ NGC/112
EA has made some big changes this time around, taking the arcade-friendly approach that made the *NHL* series such a hit in the first place back on the Sega Mega Drive. We loved it then, and we love it now – with real-time ice trails and everything!

NGC NEW ENTRY

45 DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT 87

NINTENDO ■ NGC/103
Get the bongos out, it's time to change your gaming habits. Gone are the days of using the D-pad for platformers. Who needs them when you've got bongos? This might sound odd, but it all makes sense in practice. Be warned: you'll need a Radox bath to soothe your aching arm muscles by the end of it.

46 MADDEN NFL 2005 87

EA ■ NGC/99
The main change to this instalment is the inclusion of the hit stick, which lets you decide how much physical impact your tackles have. Apart from that, and a few tweaks to defensive plays and franchise mode, it's pretty much business as usual, with all the usual stats and player updates you'd expect.

47 DEF JAM: VENDETTA 87

EA ■ NGC/82
Loads of famous rappers get together to give wrestling games a kick up the booty. Start off as a rookie and fight your way through the likes of DMX, Redman and Ludacris, then you'll have the pick of the ladies – though their blokes won't be too happy. Need we mention the great hip-hop soundtrack?

48 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3 87

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67
Absolutely stinks of PS2 – go on, smell it – but it's such good fun that it doesn't really matter. You'll find masses of grinds, stunts and a huge range of locations. Come on guys, this is Tony Hawk – before he got in with Bam Margera and started clowning around in cars. You know exactly what this is like…

49 LOST KINGDOMS 2 87

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/81
Although nowhere near as good as *Zelda* and *PSO*, *Lost Kingdoms 2* is a beautiful looking card-based RPG – statophiles are going to love building up their decks, collecting new cards to add to them and crunching numbers. It's nicely broken up into a series of small and easily digestible pieces.

50 STAR WARS ROGUE LEADER 87

LUCASARTS ■ NGC/68
Without a doubt the best *Star Wars* game on Gamecube, both in the way it looks and the way it plays. Take part in the battle of Hoth and whizz your ship down the trench to destroy the Death Star. Note: the whole thing has since been included as a two-player co-op game in *Rogue Squadron III*.

51 VIEWTIFUL JOE 2 87

CAPCOM ■ NGC/105
The original *Viewtiful Joe* wowed us all with its original mixture of 2D and 3D fighting. This instalment is more of the same in terms of gameplay, but there have been some slight tweaks, like the inclusion of Sylvia, a new playable character whose different FX powers alter the style of the puzzles.

52 BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL 86

UBISOFT ■ NGC/90
Wonderful looking action adventure which has you finding rare animals and tackling an alien invasion. The visuals are stunning and the speech and effects make the grade, too; even the minigames are fun. The world is huge and detailed, but it is slightly easy and won't last as long as you'll want it to.

53 FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES 86

SQUARE ■ NGC/91
Multiplayer RPG for up to four players, but each one will need a GBA and link cable, making this expensive if you're to play it properly. The order in which you pick up spells can be a bit random and the players' shared air bubble can be claustrophobic, but all in all this is good looking and ambitious.

54 WARIO WORLD 86

NINTENDO ■ NGC/83
Punching, pounding, portly fun. That's fun with a capital F (and U and N). The meths-swilling anti-Mario gets his very own game, and it's every bit as mad as you'd expect. Gather garlic to boost your strength and embark on a (too short) escapade that combines platforming and fighting. Wah-hah-haaaa!

55 BURNOUT 86

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67
This was a killer racer in its day, but was massively improved upon by its sequel. Despite the spectacular crashes, inch-perfect handling and smooth framerate, we'd still recommend you buy *Burnout 2*, because it's got all that and so much more. *Burnout* itself is worth a look though, and won't disappoint.

56 BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG 86

SEGA ■ NGC/87
Bright and bouncy, you'll have the 'la-la-la' theme tune stuck in your head for days after playing this bizarre, very Japanese platformer. Were it not for the annoyingly glitchy later levels and the poor camera, this would be a classic. Who'd have thought rolling an egg around could be so much fun?

DIRECTORY
The best Gamecube games around

57 PIKMIN 86
NINTENDO ■ NGC/80

Only Shigsy could have come up with a real-time strategy game set in a garden. Olimar's first visit to Earth is a resource-management revelation. You have 100 Pikmin to carry out your commands as you try to rebuild your ship before you run out of air. It looks as wonderful as it plays, but it's just too short.



58 XIII 86
UBISOFT ■ NGC/88

Unusual graphics, cel-shaded characters and scenes, plus comic-style effects (there are guns that literally go 'bam'...) set this FPS apart from the gun-toting crowd. Your sixth sense and a bit of stealth help to vary the pace, and when that's all over there's a great multiplayer mode.



59 NFL 2K3 86
SEGA ■ NGC/79

Possibly not as much fun as *Madden*, owing to the amount of work you have to put in to get your 11 bruisers playing together effectively. However, the enormous franchise mode and great sound and graphics make this a decent enough game of American football, if a tad out-of-date.




60 THE LORD OF THE RINGS RETURN OF THE KING 86
EA ■ NGC/87

Orc-slashing, goblin-gutting goodness featuring your favourite film fellowship. With more playable characters than *The Two Towers* (notably, Gandalf is now in the mix), this decent hack'n'slash takes you from Helm's Deep through to the defeat of Sauron at the Crack of Doom via some nifty spider action.



61 NBA LIVE 2004 86
EA ■ NGC/88

Underneath the polished EA Sports surface lies the expected, impressively deep layer of substance. The licensed music and players are supported by a strong bedrock of stats, facts and character creation tools. Overall control has been improved and you've got more offensive options. It's soulless but slick.



62 RESIDENT EVIL ZERO 85
CAPCOM ■ NGC/78

Controlling two characters (Rebecca and Billy), you shoot your way through the usual hordes of zombies and monsters, solving puzzles to progress. Great cutscenes and in-game visuals mean this looks a treat, and it's got bags of the old *Resi* atmosphere (a coppery, bloody, fear-filled atmosphere then...).



63 MARIO GOLF TOADSTOOL TOUR 85
NINTENDO ■ NGC/95

For a *Mario* game there's a surprising lack of Ninty-ness in many of the courses – it's just not as wacky as we'd like. And there's plenty of room for sensible in, say, *Tiger Woods*. That aside, it's easy to pick up the controls and the graphics are crisp and shiny. Plenty of modes and unlockables add longevity.



64 IKARUGA 85
ATARI ■ NGC/80

Its toughness is the stuff of legend, even on the easy setting. Your little spaceship fires white and black projectiles, and you have to hit the black and white nasties with their opposite colour. There are only five of the well-designed levels, but it will take you a while to see them all. Splendid space crusade.



65 FIFA 2004 85
EA ■ NGC/87

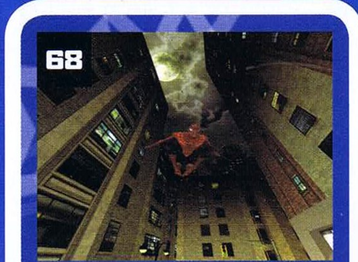
Continuing the healthy rivalry between *FIFA* and *Pro Evo*, *FIFA 2004* is the best football sim on Gamecube (unless you import *Winning Eleven* from Japan), with around 400 licensed, face-scanned players, teams and stadia. The free kick system's been tweaked, and the corner kicks are menu-driven. It's all here.

66 EXTREME G 3 85
ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67

This is an underrated gem. It's very fast, the tracks are huge, sprawling and well-designed, and you'll find some very cunning uses for the inventive weapons. The only downsides are that it's a teeny bit soulless and the multiplayer mode is nowhere near as good as it could have been.

67 SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY 85
UBISOFT ■ NGC/106

This was the game that was supposed to give the *Splinter Cell* series a kick up the arse; unfortunately that didn't happen. What did happen was a thorough spit and polish job – for example, the levels are no longer linear – and as a result it feels much fresher. The addition of a co-op mode was also very welcome.



68 SPIDER-MAN 2 84
ACTIVISION ■ NGC/96

How long were we waiting for a game that actually makes us feel like a superhero? Well, here it is! Freely swinging through an enormous city, you'll feel the joy of being Spider-man, doing whatever a spider can. The only drawbacks to the game are that it doesn't look particularly pretty and the missions tend to be based on following blips on a radar screen to get to a destination, then bashing buttons to fulfill the task. But it's still an amazing experience – the city is your playground.

69 KILLER 7 84
CAPCOM ■ NGC/109

Capcom's highly original, inventive and downright weird adventure is certainly interesting. You play Harman, the man with a squad of deadly assassins inside his head. You can choose between seven of his different personalities – each with their own specific abilities – in your quest to defeat the Heaven's Smiles.

70 JUDGE DREDD: DREDD VS DEATH 84
VIVENDI ■ NGC/89

Dredd Vs Death sees the famous Mega City One come to life. Sadly, it's not an especially *long* life. While it lasts you get to play as ol' chinny himself: solving crimes, nailing crooks and eventually tracking down the Dark Judges. The setting and story are spot-on and the fiddly controls are the only let-down.

71 POKÉMON COLOSSEUM 84
NINTENDO ■ NGC/93

The Pokémon series gains an RPG! Your task is to save the Shadow Pokémon from Darkness and destroy the powers of the people corrupting the poor critters. There's an awful lot of fighting here and you'll need a GBA Pokémon game to get the most out of Colosseum mode. If you're a fan, you'll love this.

72 TALES OF SYMPHONIA 84
NAMCO ■ NGC/100

This is very much a traditional RPG, and a very good looking one at that. The characters are beautifully designed and the locations are all, without exception, stunning. The only downer in the visual stakes is the relatively ugly overworld. The rubbish, clichéd dialogue will have you gnawing your arm off, too.

TOP FIVE ADVENTURE /RPGS



ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
Phenomenal. A reason to own a Gamecube in itself.

HARVEST MOON : A WONDERFUL LIFE
Not your traditional RPG; this is an endearing, farming treat of a game.

TALES OF SYMPHONIA
A beautiful and epic RPG with the best battle system on the Gamecube.

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
A number-cruncher that turns epic with a bit of t'internet.

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
If 'classic' RPGs are your bag, this boy'll be a sackful of joy.

TOP FIVE ACTION ADVENTURE



RESIDENT EVIL 4
Cranks up the action, taking the Resident Evil series to new heights.

HITMAN 2
Compelling assassin sim that kills the competition dead.

SECOND SIGHT
Brilliant psychic stealth-'em-up from the team that brought you *Timesplitters 2*.

MGS: THE TWIN SNAKES
Beautifully updated version of Solid Snake's first outing.

ETERNAL DARKNESS
Dark, psychological horror – exclusive to Gamecube.

73 RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC 84
UBISOFT ■ NGC/78

Rayman somehow manages to create a fun platformer, despite the fact that he seems to be stuck in an age when this kind of thing was revolutionary. But it's bright, it's solid and it's got some enjoyable minigames. It doesn't get boring and the difficulty curve is scaled just right.

74 ISS2 83
KONAMI ■ NGC/68

This series was untouchable for a while, but then EA found out and made its *FIFA* games loads better, leaving the GC *ISS* behind in its wake. *ISS2* is a good game with great game commentary, but we were expecting much more of it and unfortunately these expectations weren't met.

75 STAR WARS REBEL STRIKE 83
LUCASARTS ■ NGC/88

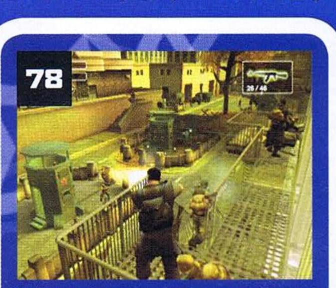
Star Wars is all about screaming TIE fighters and taking on Star Destroyers, not poncing around on foot. The on-foot sections are a bit of a trudge and they ruin the excitement of the rest of the game. But it looks and sounds great, and the two-player *Rogue Leader* is outstanding.

76 SERIOUS SAM: NEXT ENCOUNTER 83
TAKE 2 ■ NGC/94

Don't be fooled by the name, this is very silly indeed. For £20 you can spend hours gunning down wave after wave of brightly-coloured aliens across a range of historical locations. Okay, the killing can get a bit relentless, but for a bit of blasting fun, Sam's your man. Never mind the depth, feel the speed!

77 BATEN KAITOS 83
NAMCO ■ NGC/103

Role-playing adventure with card-based battles. This game is unique and delivers a wonderful, magical and fantastical world – the stunning vistas, towns and interiors are awash with lavish colours. Even the card system works well. Unfortunately it is let down by some stilted and painfully wooden voice acting.



78 FREEDOM FIGHTERS 83
EA ■ NGC/86

Although much less serious in tone and delivery than *Conflict: Desert Storm 2*, this is still a highly enjoyable squad-based third-person shooter. Unfortunately, there are some issues with controls, but if you look beyond this you'll find an absorbing and, most importantly, fun game. Many of the levels interact with each other, for example, so objectives that are completed or neglected in one mission will affect the events in another. Forget the serious side and relax: this is pure fun.

79 FIFA 2003 83
EA ■ NGC/75

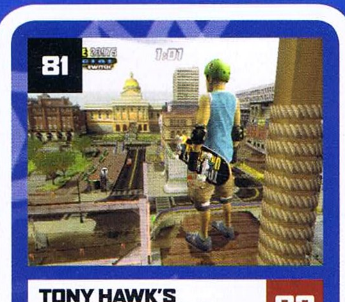
After years of annual statistic and slight gameplay tweaks, this was the turnaround for the *FIFA* series. After having the football crown stolen by *Pro Evo*, EA sought to re-establish themselves as the kings of the footie game. The result was a remarkably in-depth, fluid and well presented game of football.

80 SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR 82

SEGA ■ NGC/112

You take control of Spartan, a conveniently named Spartan warrior, as he sets out to dismember every single Roman in the world. With up to 200 people on-screen at any given time, this is hectic, violent and bloody, but it's great fun.





81 TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2 82

ACTIVISION ■ NGC/100

This time the graphics have a more cartoony feel, and Story mode features a lot of Bam Margera, so if you find him annoying there's a very good chance you won't like this game. Some bits don't belong in a skateboard game, like driving vehicles and walking, for example – what rubbish. The rest is great, however. It keeps the classic Tony Hawk gameplay and includes chunks of the first three games – with a timer!



82 SUPER MONKEY BALL 2 82

SEGA ■ NGC/78

If games teach you one thing, it's this: out of balls, monkeys probably carry guns and want you dead. Inside balls, however (a monkey's natural habitat), the little creatures are an absolute delight. The format is the same as the first in the series, and there are new minigames and over 100 levels.



83 METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM 82

VIVENDI ■ NGC/88

As hard as Ray Winstone in a steel top hat, this robot shoot-'em-up is tough right from the training level. You take control of a small yellow robot called Glitch, and your task is to defeat a rock-hard army of robots. The camera can be awkward, though, and the landscape hazards are unfairly harsh.

84 PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP III: CARD REVOLUTION 82

SEGA ■ NGC/94

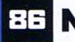
This is a new idea and a new direction for *PSO* card-based battling. You now have to choose a side (the Arkz or the Heroside) and do battle with dice and cards. It's best if you are familiar with the original *PSO* though and, unfortunately, you will need a broadband adapter to play.



85 THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT 82

EA ■ NGC/89

Having spent the previous game imprisoned in their own home, this instalment sees your virtual people released into the real world to work. It still doesn't exactly look brilliant or sound that great, but as with all games which have no absolute goal or plot, it will last you a very, very long time indeed.



86 NFL STREET 2 81

EA ■ NGC/103

This game tears up the rulebook and gives you licence to run like hell, boasting a new ability that lets you run around the walls *Prince of Persia*-style to gain height when catching or passing a human pile-up. A quality package, though probably without mass appeal outside the US.

PAUL'S SENSE TALK



TIP 1

Don't waste the prepaid envelopes that credit card companies send you with their junk mail every day. Fill them with confetti to brighten the day of whoever you send them back to.

TIP 2

Have you got one of those 'Baby on Board' signs in the back of your car? Yup? Well, here's a newsflash! By the nature of accidents, you're just as likely to be involved in one whether you've got a sign in your car or not – cos it's an 'accident' see! Furthermore, if you're rendered unconcious at the scene, the brave firemen have to keep looking for your baby until its whereabouts are discovered. This is regardless of whether the little person was in your car, or being safely looked after at your auntie's house. My tip to you is, lose it, idiot. The sign that is, not the baby.

TIP 3

Look, don't. Just don't. I've had a bad day, ok. A Unimog tried to climb over my car on the way into work this morning. That was a surprise.

Do you have more 'sense' than this gurning simpleton? More than likely! So send 'em in. The best get printed and, if you're really lucky, he may send you a piece of his knackered old ride. Lucky you!

Send them to Paul at **paul.edwards@futurenet.co.uk** or to Sense Talk at the usual address.

87 OCARINA OF TIME MASTER QUEST 81

NINTENDO ■ NGC/80

This game is nothing short of a bargain. Although the graphics haven't been updated that doesn't mean that the gameplay isn't up to scratch. This version has tougher dungeons and different puzzles from the original *OOT*. Forget the graphics (it's an old game) and immerse yourself in Rinkydink's earlier outing.

88 TIGER WOODS 06 81

EA ■ NGC/112

Tiger Woods' almost perfect swing system has had a few tweaks for 2006. The ball is now controlled by the C-stick and putting is now on the analogue stick. Despite being tricky to get used to, the classic *Tiger Woods* gameplay remains intact.



89 AGGRESSIVE INLINE 81

ACCLAIM ■ NGC/72

A top class rollerblading sim. Having wheels that stay attached to your feet when they're off the floor means that you can pull off moves like swinging around lampposts. There's even a Career mode. On the negative side, the soundtrack is rubbish and the graphics are a little bland.

90 THE SIMS 81

EA ■ NGC/79

Your Sim has to do all the things a real person would: leave home, make friends, find a partner, eat, sleep and go to the lav. Yet it's all done in a bizarrely addictive way. There's no point to it and there are no objectives, but that's life for you – entirely meaningless, but you want to keep doing it anyway.

91 F1 CAREER CHALLENGE 81

EA ■ NGC/83

Ever wanted to indulge in the life of an F1 driver? Now you can. This is a part of EA's *F1* series, but with the addition of an extensive Career mode. There are a series of trials to prove you can handle the F1 disciplines, then you can get on with the racing part, which looks good, shifts well and handles nicely.

92 NHL 2005 80

EA ■ NGC/99

This is a slick, quick game of hockey. The action's quick and the AI and graphics have been improved, but if you dislike the sport there simply won't be enough here to convince you that it's worthwhile. For the fans though, it's easy to learn and you can rack up huge scores. Good fun.

93 MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE 80

MIDWAY ■ NGC/77

The fighting system's been vastly overhauled from earlier *MKs*, although it's far too easy to get an infinite by button mashing. The lack of ring-outs and stage-specific finishers is disappointing. Still, you've got three fighting styles per character, a ton of unlockables and loads of gore. Best with two players.

94 BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/81

Endlessly battling goblins and orcs can get a little tedious, but if you've ever played D&D you'll enjoy levelling up and spending your EXP. However, it's a lazy port from PS2, with slowdown and a jittery framerate. Nonetheless, the game still looks a treat and one level has you beating up cowardly lions.

95 PAC-MAN VS 80

NAMCO ■ NGC/90

This tiny gem is free, but only when you buy another, inferior, full-priced title (*R: Racing Evolution*). While *Pac-Man Vs* isn't particularly complex, the four-player mechanic works well. Think of it as a trifle to have fun with between serious gaming sessions. You'll need a GBA and link cable to play it properly.

96 DEF JAM: FIGHT FOR NY 80

EA ■ NGC/99

Following on directly from the end of *Def Jam: Vendetta*, this is yet another wrestling/rap crossover that will appeal to fans of both genres. The wrestling is slickly executed and there are masses of unlockables and extras to keep you occupied. Unfortunately, it is ruined by a poor framerate.

97 THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/87

After a succession of gaming stinkers, the Simpsons take a tip from *Grand Theft Auto* and set about stealing cars, taking on missions and doling out a bit of cartoon-style violence. It's certainly not original by any stretch of the imagination, but it is loads of fun, with over 50 missions and a multiplayer.

98 MADDEN NFL 06 80

EA ■ NGC/112

Despite the fact that this hasn't had any real improvements to the gameplay, it's still one of the slickest games of American football on Gamecube. Superstar mode and QB mode have been added, but they don't add anything to the series.



99 MARIO PARTY 5 80

NINTENDO ■ NGC/89

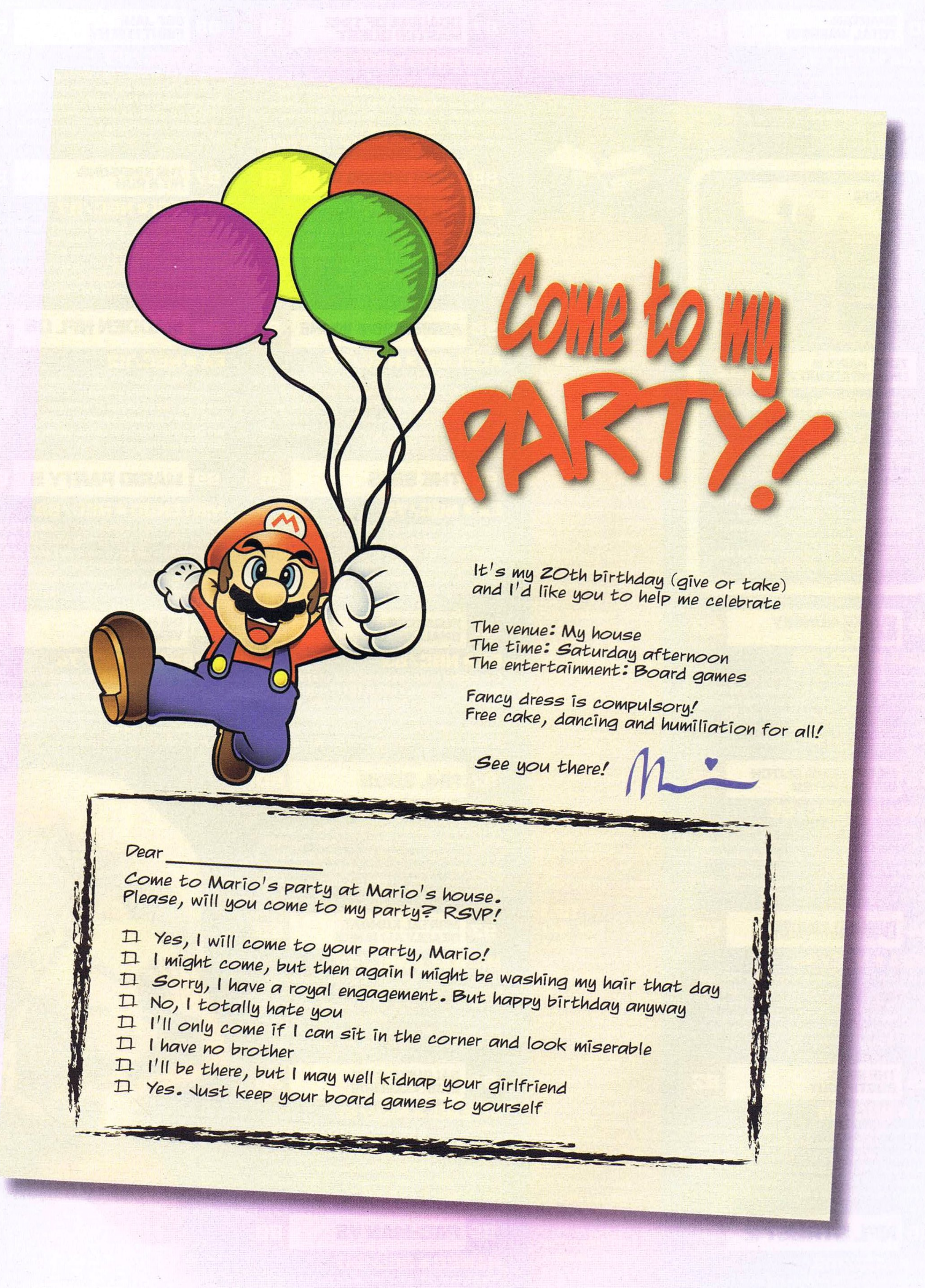
Ain't no party like a *Mario Party;* except all the other parties in the series. This console-based boardgame is one of the best yet, but is really only good as a multiplayer game. The board game bits can be a little slow and dull, but the minigames (popping other players' inner tubes, mech fights…) are hilarious.

100 DIE HARD: VENDETTA 80

VIVENDI ■ NGC/74

WARNING: Do not play this in earshot of old people; the excessive swearing may offend their delicate ears. There's a fair bit of gunplay, some excellent set-pieces and cheesy dialogue in generous proportions, all three of which are hampered by cumbersome controls and frustrating sections.




Come to my PARTY!
It's my 20th birthday (give or take) and I'd like you to help me celebrate
The venue: My house
The time: Saturday afternoon
The entertainment: Board games
Fancy dress is compulsory!
Free cake, dancing and humiliation for all!
See you there!
Dear
Come to Mario's party at Mario's house.
Please, will you come to my party? RSVP!
Yes, I will come to your party, Mario!
I might come, but then again I might be washing my hair that day
Sorry, I have a royal engagement. But happy birthday anyway
No, I totally hate you
I'll only come if I can sit in the corner and look miserable
I have no brother
I'll be there, but I may well kidnap your girlfriend
Yes. Just keep your board games to yourself